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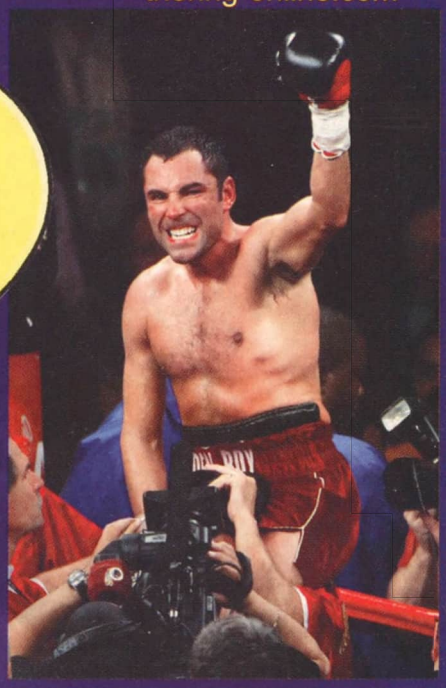

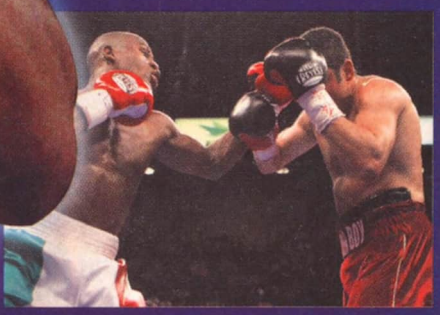

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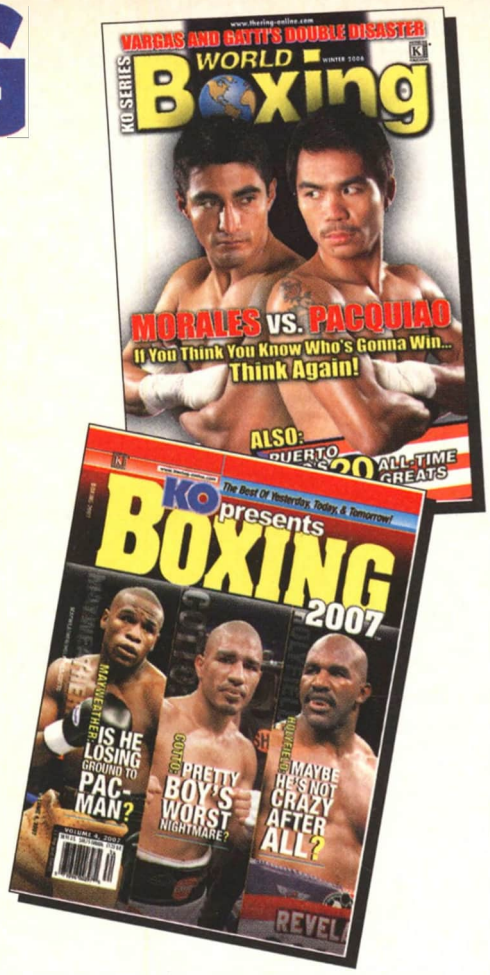


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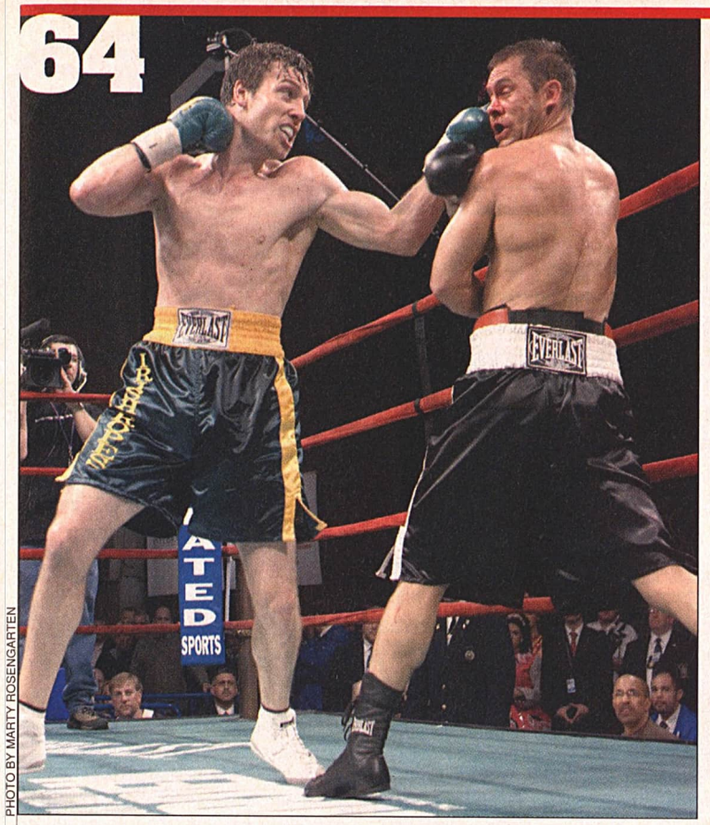


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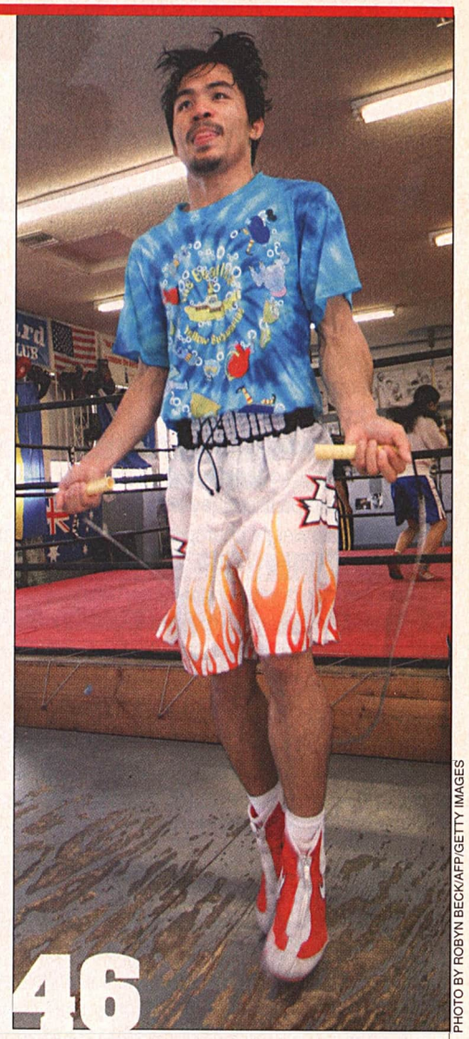


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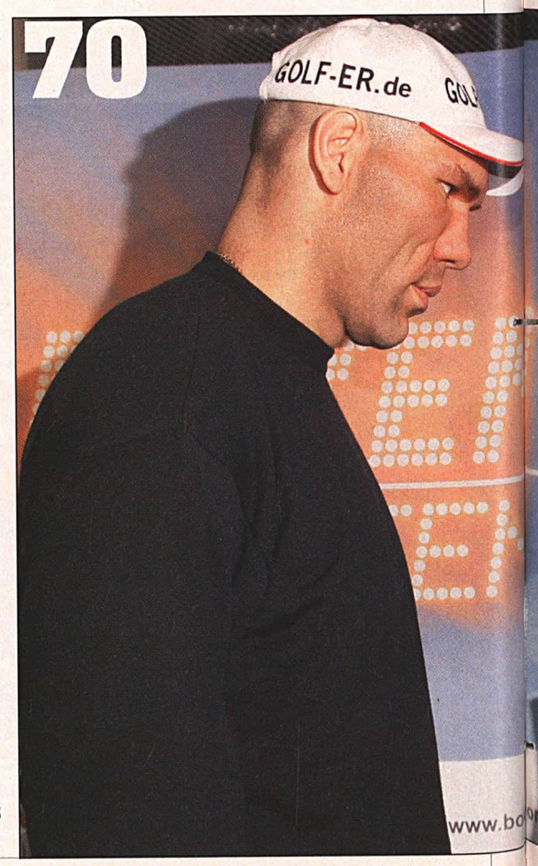

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LATZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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# [Ringside]

As regular readers are well aware, THE RING Championship Policy is rooted in the belief that titles should be won and lost in the ring, which means that, unlike the various alphabet groups, we do not strip world champions. THE RING believes that the vast majority of champions are honorable men who want to fight the best possible challengers, but that doesn't mean we won't try to nudge them in the right direction from time to time.

What follows is a critique of the nine reigning RING champions, including suggestions of what course we feel they should take in order to live up to the responsibility that comes with the revered position they hold.

•Cruiserweight champion Jean-Marc Mormeck recently regained the title by out-brawling O'Neil Bell. There is talk of a rubber match, which would be fine with us, especially as their first two bouts were highly entertaining. But when Mormeck and Bell are finished with each other, the winner of Krzysztof Wlodarczk-Steve Cunningham II should get the next crack.

•Bernard Hopkins will make his first defense of the light heavyweight title when he takes on middleweight Winky Wright in July. It's an intriguing contest, but the winner must turn his attention toward the division he rules and give number-one contender Zsolt Erdei an opportunity to fight for the genuine 175-pound crown.

•It's time super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe got down to serious business and fought Mikkel Kessler. The Welshman has had two easy defenses since winning the vacant title against Jeff Lacy, and owes it to the sport to forget proposed dalliances with Hopkins, Jermain Taylor, and Roy Jones, and make the only fight in the 168-pound that really matters.

•Taylor began his middleweight reign with a pair of gutsy choices, defending against Hopkins and Wright, two of the best fighters in the world. But since then he's lowered his sights dramatically, taking on junior middleweights Kassim Ouma and Cory Spinks. This simply isn't good enough. Time to start fighting guys your own size again, Jermain. The winner of the Edison Miranda-Kelly Pavlik bout would be a good place to begin.

•World welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather just added the WBC super welterweight strap to his collection by beating Oscar De La Hoya, but will eventually have to decided in which division he intends to fight.

•Junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton is scheduled to fight number-one contender Jose Luis Castillo in late-June, and you can't ask more than that. Good for you, Ricky.

•For some unfathomable reason, Joel Casamayor was screwed out of the WBC lightweight trinket he won by beating Diego Corrales, but he also won THE RING belt in that bout. Hopefully, the talented but aging Cuban has learned his lesson, and will concentrate on defending the true title instead of getting back into bed with the bandits that just robbed him.

•Newly minted junior featherweight champion Rafael Marquez has plenty of valid options, including a rematch with Israel Vazquez or a bout with THE RING's number-one contender, Celestino Caballero. And that's just the tip of the iceberg in the talent-rich 122-pound class.

•RING108-pound champion Hugo Cazares made his first defense on May 4 with an easy second-round knockout of Wifrido Perez, a mandatory alphabet challenger not even rated among THE RING's top-10 junior flyweights. Not a very ambitious start for Cazares, and one obviously aimed at placating an organization that will strip him the first time he fails to do their bidding. Wise up, Hugo. Forget the alphabet nonsense and fight legitimate contenders in defense off the legitimate title.

**Nigel Collins**
**Editor-in-Chief**

The Ring

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**Everlasting . . .** Fist cast by Diego Corrales.

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**Hooray . . .** George Foreman enjoys fans along parade route.

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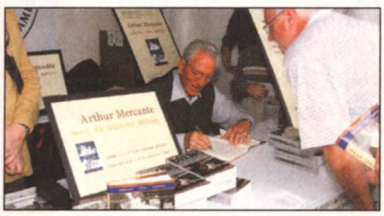



Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

### MUSEUM GROUNDS

**Autographs . . .** "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

### 5K RACE, FUN RUN

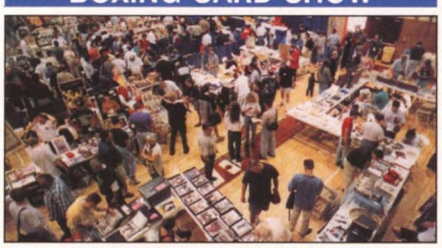
**Finish Line . . .** "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

**Go . . .** Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

### INDUCTION CEREMONY

**A Moment in Time . . .** "Chiquita" Gonzalez and Michael Carbajal proudly show their Hall of Fame rings.

### BOXING CARD SHOW



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### GOLF TOURNAMENT

**Chip . . .** Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

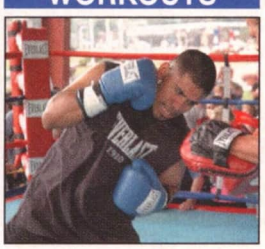
### COCKTAIL PARTY

**Stars . . .** Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

### MUSEUM

Bob Arum and Angelo Dundee point to their plaques on the Hall of Fame Wall.

### WORKOUTS



Juan Diaz works the bag mitts during daily public workouts.

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# Tragedy In Thailand

The Philippines Games and Amusement Board (GAB), which governs professional boxing in the country, has placed a ban on Filipino boxers fighting in Thailand. But that's not going to help Lito Sisnorio, the most recent fighter to die of injuries suffered during a bout in Thailand.

According to RING correspondents Ted Lerner (Philippines) and Scott Mallon (Thailand), what happened to Sisnorio was symptomatic of the two-way system between the Philippines and Thailand that allows promoters to import cannon fodder to fatten the records of local heroes.

PHOTO BY SCOTT MALLON

***Sisnorio: Victim of fatal mismatch***

Thai law states that Filipino boxers must have a letter of clearance from the GAB before fighting in Thailand, but that did not happen prior to Sisnorio's fight with Chatchai Sasakul, which has led to the current ban. The GAB has informed Thailand's Department of Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the ban and asked them to abide by the ruling.

That Sisnorio was even considered as an opponent for Sasakul, 58-3 (37), is a disgrace. The Filipino entered the ring for the fatal March 30 bout with a skimpy 10-5-2 (3) record, having lost five of his last six bouts. In his most recent outing prior to suffering a fourth-round knockout to Sasakul, Sisnorio was knocked out by WBC flyweight titleholder Pongsaklek Wonjongkam in a January 26 non-title bout.

"The matchmaker for the Sasakul-Sisnorio fight, Panya Prachakorn, was banned from the Philippines by the GAB for bringing in ringers," reported Mallon. "Yet the Thai Sports Authority allows him to continue unabated."

According to Joaquin Henson of *The Philippine Star*, North Cotabato (Philippines) Governor Manny Pinol, who flew to Bangkok to claim Sisnorio's body, described the exploitation of Filipino fighters as "despicable" and condemned it as "an act of human trafficking."

Sisnorio's girlfriend, Jonhmae Bacus, called for a stop to the prostitution of Filipino fighters and lashed out at the boxing brokers who arranged the mismatch that led to her 24-year-old boyfriend's death.

"I want justice for Lito," said Bacus. "Lito was exploited. Somebody should be made to pay for this crime."

Bacus told Henson that Sisnorio and stablemate Michael Rodriguez left manager Jemuel Contayoso's home in Kidaspawan last December to travel to Bangkok after they were offered a series of fights by Prachakorn through Rex Paciones, who reportedly works for unlicensed boxing agent Bong Obero. ABS-CBN, the Philippines' leading television and broadcasting company, reported that Obero was being held at a detention center in Nueva Ecija on an illegal recruitment complaint.

"It's the same old story of young men striving to break free from the bondage of their poverty in the only way they know how, often ending up broken and, in some heartbreaking instances, meeting death in the in ring," wrote Ronnie Nathanielsz in *Manila Standard Today*.

Whether or not Sisnorio's tragic death and the GAB's ban will lead to lasting reform is problematical.

"My guess is that the Thais will do what they always do, say: 'Oh sorry, sorry, sorry,' and then go right back to doing the same thing over and over again," said Mallon.

**—Nigel Collins**

# Tyson Update

Although he hasn't fought since Kevin McBride stopped him in June 2005, former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, 40, continues to make headlines.

On April 12, Tyson left rehab in California for a day in order to appear in Maricopa County Superior Court in Mesa, Arizona, where he plead not guilty to felony drug possession. The charges stem from an arrested on December 29, 2006, when Scottsdale police stopped Tyson's car as he left a nightclub. According court records, police found a bag of cocaine in Tyson's back pocket and another in a package of cigarettes in his car.

County prosecutor Andrew Thomas has said he will seek the maximum sentence, imprisonment of 7½ years. The trial is scheduled to begin on August 20. Meanwhile, Tyson returned to the rehab facility.

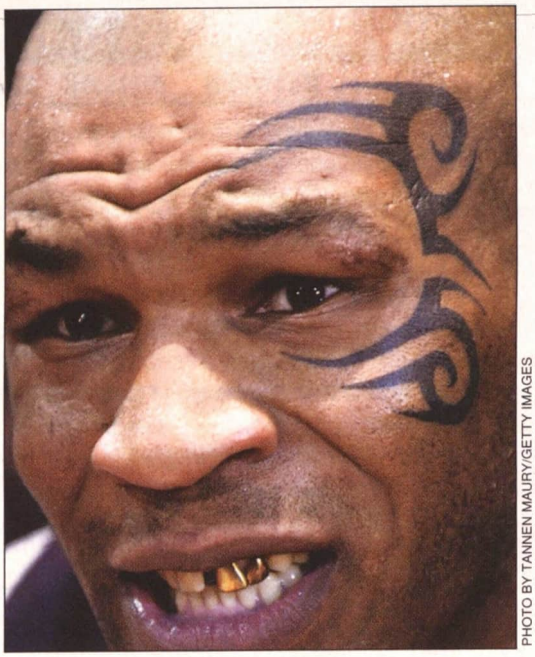


PHOTO BY TANNEN MAURY/GETTY IMAGES

*Tyson: Jail vs. Bollywood*

"We're very pleased with Mike's progress in treatment," said Richard Schonfield, one of Tyson's lawyers. "He's 72 days sober. We're proud of him."

Tyson has sold his home in Paradise Valley, a suburb of Phoenix, for $2.3-million, and already has his next gig lined up if he can beat the drug rap. According to an Associated Press story out of Mumbai, India, Iron Mike has agreed to film a promotional video for a Bollywood movie called *Fool And Final*. The film, produced by Firoze Nadiadwah and directed by Ahmed Khan, is a comedy that stars action hero Sunny Deol.

"The movie is a laugh riot," said N. Chattani, who is handling publicity for the movie, "and the filmmakers thought Tyson would be great for the promo."

# Frazier vs. Frazier Averted

For a few days in mid-April, it looked like former heavyweight champion Joe Frazier would come out smokin' against his daughter, Jacqueline Frazier-Lyde, in a nasty courtroom battle.

The 63-year-old ex-champ had filed a lawsuit in Philadelphia Common Pleas Court in an attempt to retrieve contracts and other business papers that were in his daughter's possession because she had served as his lawyer and business advisor from 1989 to 2004. The suit charged that Frazier-Lyde had failed to explain where the records were and had refused to accept a certified letter demanding their return.

PHOTPHOTO BY PAT ORR

*Feuding Fraziers, Jacqui and Joe*

Frazier is financially strapped and may have missed out on film royalties, product endorsement fees, or other income promised in the contracts.

"This guy made a lot of money, was heavyweight champion of the world, and he doesn't have much left," said Frazier's attorney, Michael P. Kelly. "So what happened to it?"

"He has been swindled and mismanaged," said Smokin' Joe's current manager, Les Wolff.

A few days after the lawsuit became public knowledge, Frazier told his lawyer to drop it.

"We're giving her a chance to live up to her word," said Kelly. "If we're not fully satisfied, I'll be right back, quicker than a Joe Frazier left hook."

# TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By William Dettloff

| DATE | WINNER/LOSER | NETWORK | DIVISION | SIGNIFICANCE | MATCHUP | RESULT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3/16/07 | Erik Aiken D 10 Cruz Carvajal | ESPN2 | f | C+ | C+ | B- |
| *Who else thought at the start Carvajal was in for a beating?* | | | | | | |
| 3/17/07 | Daniel Ponce De Leon W 12 Gerry Penalosa | HBO PPV | jf | B+ | C+ | C+ |
| *The good news is Ponce De Leon proved he could win a decision; the bad is he may not have deserved it* | | | | | | |
| 3/17/07 | Demetrius Hopkins W 12 Steve Forbes | HBO PPV | jw | C+ | B+ | B- |
| *If there is a worse decision than this during the year, there can be no defending this sport anymore* | | | | | | |
| 3/17/07 | Juan Manuel Marquez W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera | HBO PPV | jl | A | A+ | A- |
| *Sure, we can do a rematch, or we can do the fight everyone wants to see: Marquez-Pacquiao II* | | | | | | |
| 3/23/07 | Jesse Feliciano KO 8 Delvin Rodriguez | ESPN2 | w | C- | B+ | B- |
| *The bad news is this only sets up Feliciano for more beatings down the road against fighters with better chins* | | | | | | |
| 3/24/07 | Mikkel Kessler W 12 Librado Andrade | HBO | sm | A- | C+ | C |
| *Be honest: Who the hell ever thought we'd see a Dane who can fight like Kessler can?* | | | | | | |
| 3/30/07 | Joel Julio KO 7 Thomas Davis | ESPN2 | jm | C- | B- | C |
| *Hand it to Julio: He beat the attitude out of Davis, who came in like he was the man to beat* | | | | | | |
| 3/30/07 | Mary Jo Sanders W 10 Valerie Mahfood | ESPN2 | m | D- | D | D+ |
| *A clear violation of the first commandment of contemporary boxing: no chicks in the main event* | | | | | | |
| 4/6/07 | Juan Buendia W 8 Israel Cardona | ESPN2 | w | C- | B- | C |
| *Cardona would have beaten a lot of second-tier guys this night, but not Buendia, who was too young and hungry* | | | | | | |
| 4/6/07 | Matt Godfrey KO 2 Felix Cora | ESPN2 | c | C | B+ | C |
| *Sometimes, even when it doesn't look like it, the fighter knows what he's doing; Godfrey knew* | | | | | | |
| 4/6/07 | Art Binkowski KO 8 Raphael Butler | Showtime | h | C- | B | C+ |
| *Binkowski can't fight a lick but he gives a hell of a postfight interview doesn't he?* | | | | | | |
| 4/6/07 | Travis Walker W 10 George Garcia | Showtime | h | C- | C+ | D |
| *A perfect couple: Walker looks like more fighter than he is, and Garcia isn't quite as bad as he looks* | | | | | | |
| 4/7/07 | Joshua Clottey W 10 Diego Corrales | Showtime | jm | B+ | B+ | C+ |
| *When did the welterweight division get so full of good fighters?* | | | | | | |
| 4/7/07 | Amir Khan KO 3 Steffy Bull | HBO | jw | B- | D- | D- |
| *Khan sure looks like the goods, but it's early, folks* | | | | | | |
| **4/7/07** | **Joe Calzaghe KO 3 Peter Manfredo** | **HBO** | **world sm** | **A** | **D+** | **F** |
| ***Hey, O'Connor, why not stop it during the national anthems next time?*** | | | | | | |
| 4/11/07 | Andry Tsurkan KO 9 Sammy Sparkman | ESPN2 | jm | C+ | C | C+ |
| *Who else thinks Tsurkan's face might split apart if he happens to forget himself and smiles?* | | | | | | |
| 4/11/07 | Raymon Joval W 10 Willie Gibbs | ESPN2 | m | C+ | B- | C |
| *Say goodbye to the last decent Philadelphia middleweight named "Willie" that you'll ever see* | | | | | | |
| 4/13/07 | Zab Judah NC 1 Ruben Galvan | ESPN2 | w | B | D+ | F |
| *Galvan could have bled out by the time the doctor and ref decided to stop the fight* | | | | | | |
| 4/14/07 | Edgar Sosa W 12 Brian Viloria | PPV | jfl | B+ | C | A- |
| *This fight alone just about made the bigger cable bill worth it* | | | | | | |
| 4/14/07 | Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 2 Anthony Shuler | PPV | jm | C+ | B- | C+ |
| *Don't underestimate Chavez just because he's a legend's son* | | | | | | |
| 4/14/07 | Christian Mijares W 12 Jorge Arce | PPV | jf | A | A- | B |
| *Okay, so Arce can't handle a tall, very talented boxer; it's no reason he can't fight another puncher, is it?* | | | | | | |
| 4/14/07 | Manny Pacquiao KO 8 Jorge Solis | PPV | jl | A+ | C- | B |
| *If Solis were a different kind of fighter, a little tougher, this might have gotten dicey for Pacquiao* | | | | | | |
| 4/14/07 | Ruslan Chagaev W 12 Nicolay Valuev | MSG | h | B+ | C- | C |
| *This would have been a lot more fun if Chagaev could punch* | | | | | | |
| 4/18/07 | Chris Byrd KO 7 Paul Marinacchio | ESPN2 | h | C+ | D- | D |
| *If there's anyone who makes more annoying facial expressions during a fight than Byrd does, we haven't seen him* | | | | | | |

**Category Explanation:** "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

**Division key:** h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

**Network key:** PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net;Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; Versus

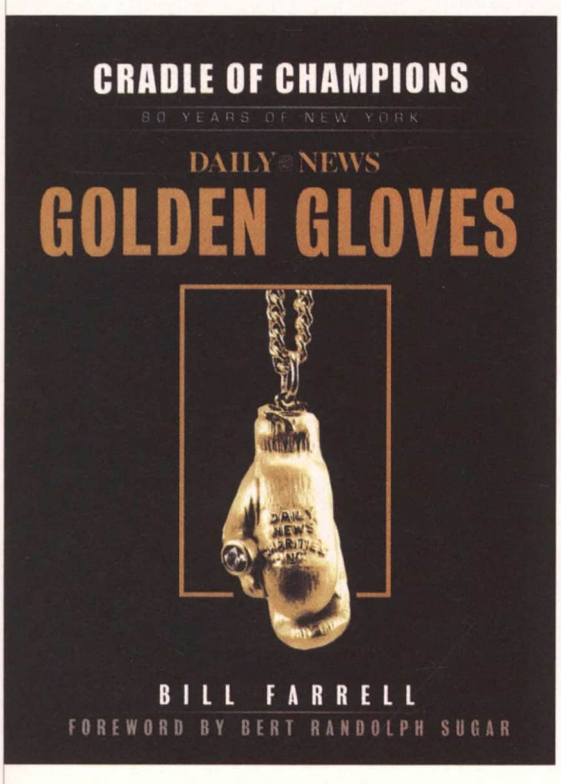
# Boxing Bookshelf

In today's sports world, amateur boxing has virtually vanished. Gone are the days when the exploits of the U.S.A. Boxing Team were a staple of Olympic television broadcasts. Since the 1988 Games in Seoul, South Korea, you would be hard-pressed to find any live amateur boxing on TV in the United States, other than one or two gold medal finals. Live prelims? Forget it. Only on the late night highlight reel—if you're lucky. The drop-off in attendance at live amateur shows, as well as amateur participants, has been just as pronounced.

That is why *Cradle Of Champions: Eighty Years Of New York Daily News Golden Gloves* ($24.95, 185 pages, Sports Publishing LLC) is such a treasure. Bill Farrell's salute to the New York Golden Gloves is a pictorial history of what was once one of the premier boxing events in the country, rivaling many professional cards when it came to publicity and excitement. Each chapter of this coffee table-style work covers a different era, from the Gloves' birth in 1927 (led by *Daily News* sports editor Paul Gallico) to the current century. The relatively short summary that starts each chapter is more informational than literary. But the reader will not care one bit, as the black-and-white photos are so oozing with the atmosphere of an era long gone that any boxing fan thumbing through the pages will not want to put the book down.

With today's pro bouts struggling to attract large crowds in the U.S., it seems almost inconceivable that the New York Golden Gloves finals used to draw sellout crowds of over 20,000 to Madison Square Garden on an annual basis. But the book's photos give pictorial proof of the massive throngs that would gather to watch both the future champs and chumps go at it.

Unearthed from the seemingly endless supply of pictures in the *Daily News* archives, *Cradle Of Champions* is a who's who of amateur champions and near-champions who went on to win professional world titles, such as Sugar Ray Robinson, Emile Griffith, Lou Salica, Vito Antuofermo, Riddick Bowe, Mark Breland, and an 18-year-old, 172-pound Cassius Clay.




Many of the most intriguing photographs of fighters in their youth who would be almost unrecognizable by the time they gained pro fame. For example, readers will be pleasantly surprised to discover Chuck Wepner (1964's Golden Gloves heavyweight champ) with a relatively unmarked face and a substantial shock of dark hair on his noggin.

Most of all, the book allows readers to go back in time and absorb eight decades of stirring boxing imagery, and it comes highly recommended.

**—Mike Greenhill**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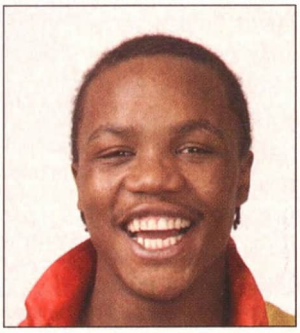
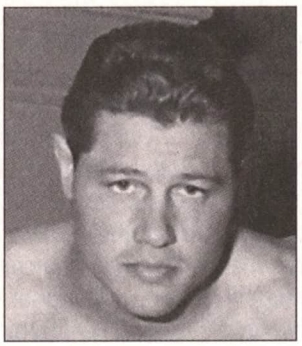
# Outside the Ropes

World junior welterweight champion **Ricky Hatton** and his brother, welterweight **Matthew Hatton**, led Manchester's first Twilight Walk to raise funds for breast cancer research and also painted their pinkie fingers pink as part of the Genesis Appeal "Pink Pinkie" week. "Breast cancer is a very serious problem affecting so many people," said Ricky. "It is an issue close to my heart because my uncle died from it. Me and Matt were very close to our uncle—he was our biggest fan, but, sadly, he has missed a lot of our success, the best moments. I think if John is able to look down and see us getting involved with the charity, he'd be proud of us" ... Former IBF junior middleweight titleholder **Kassim Ouma** has been pardoned by the Ugandan government for deserting from the army, paving the way for the fighter to return to his homeland for the first time since 1997. Ouma was kidnapped as a child and forced to join the National Resistance Army, but fled while in the United States on a boxing trip with the Ugandan amateur team and gained political asylum. "I really want to thank the Ugandan army and the president for letting my pardon go through," said Ouma. "What is in the past should be forgotten. I lost my childhood to the army, but now I have the chance to really do something representing the people of my country as a boxer in America." Ouma received an uproarious greeting upon his arrival at Entebbe airport on April 21. Fans, chanting his name, climbed over railings and ignored baton-wielding police in their eagerness to welcome home the boxer ... After splitting with longtime trainer **Buddy McGirt**, welterweight **Arturo Gatti** will have former rival **Micky Ward** in his corner when he makes his comeback on July 14 in Atlantic City. The two fighters have become friends in the wake of their celebrated trilogy. "I know Arturo's style. I know what makes him tick," said Ward, who retired in June 2003 following his final bout with Gatti. "I was a little shocked when he called to ask me, but I'm looking forward to it. I think Arturo has something left, more than he showed in his last fight (a TKO loss to Carlos Baldomir in July 2006) ... The WBA has suspended **Lorenzo Parra** and his manager **Lourdes Santana** for a year after Parra came in five pounds over the flyweight limit for his March 19 title bout with **Takefumi Sakata** in Tokyo, Japan ... **Chris A. Webb**, the boxing promoter who staged the **Danny Williams-Mike Tyson** fight in Memphis, Tennessee, in 2004, has been indicted on three federal tax charges not related to boxing ... Texas heavyweight **Reagan "Buddy" Turman**, 73, died on April 1, in Longview, Texas. He had suffered from hepatitis and cirrhosis of the liver since 1999. On February 24, 1955, Turman, who turned pro in September 1954, fought **J.D. "Sporty" Harvey** in the first bout between white and black boxers in Texas, winning a 10-round decision. Turman's biggest victory came against future Canadian champ **Bob Cleroux**, whom he outpointed on May 29, 1959, at Madison Square Garden. Turman also lost a pair of 10-round decisions to **Archie Moore**. The last three years of his career, Turman fought mainly in Europe, where he won his last three fights, finishing with a 45-15-2 (32) record in December '67 ... Boxing lost a great friend with the passing of British journalist **Ron Olver**, 91, on March 27. Olver worked as an assistant editor at the British weekly *Boxing News* in the 1950s, wrote a TV column for the publication in the '60s, but is probably best known to today's readers as the author of *BN*'s "Old Timers" column. He was also THE RING's U.K. correspondent for many years. Although almost blind since a stroke in 2003, Olver continued to write and filed his final column from his hospital bed ... Las Vegas boxing judge **Carol Castellano**, 74, died on March 30. Castellano worked more than 100 title bouts, including the **Evander Holyfield-Larry Holmes** heavyweight title fight in 1992 ... Japanese promoter-manager **Tetsuro Kawi**, 68, died of liver disease on April 19 in Yokohama. Kawi had a successful amateur career, but only managed an 11-8-4 (1) record as a pro before concentrating on handling boxers. His top fighter was **Susumu Hanagata**, who briefly held the WBA flyweight title in the mid-1970s ... Indonesian junior lightweight **Anis Dwi Mulya**, 27, died on March 20 in Jakarta, five days after suffering a sixth-round TKO loss to **Irfan Bone**. Dwi Mulya suffered a subdural and epidural hematoma in the fight, underwent surgery, regained consciousness, and seemed to be improving. But his thrombocyte level dropped before he died, leading doctors to suspect that the cause of death might have been dengue fever. There have been 27 recorded ring fatalities in Indonesia since 1948.



***Ouma: Happy to be back in Uganda***



***Turman: Dead at age 73***

## Quotable

"I'm tempted to say that the bungling of the HBO Sports department (specifically its boxing franchise) under Ross Greenburg and Kery Davis rivals that of the Bush-Cheney administration."

*—maxboxing.com columnist Steve Kim, pulling no punches in his scathing indictment of HBO's handling of the Sweet Science*

"There is no reason for me to put myself into a coffin."

*—Heavyweight contender Nicolay Valuev, commenting on his first professional defeat, a 12-round decision loss to Ruslan Chagaev*

By Don Stewart

# Matt Godfrey Cruiserweight

Even at age 12, years before he became the fighter known as "Too Smooth," Matt Godfrey was too smooth. It was 1993, and a young Godfrey was trying to impress some girls outside of a Providence rec center alongside softer-spoken pal Jason Estrada. At some point, he took it a bit too far.

"Matt tried to show off a little bit," recalled Estrada, now a heavyweight prospect. "He was always like that. He was always the smooth talker. He was always a pretty boy. One thing led to another and we ended up fighting each other out there."

Estrada's father ran out and broke up the scuffle. Dr. Roland Estrada just happened to be a boxing coach who often drove his pickup truck through Providence's housing projects in search of young recruits.

He told Godfrey that if he liked fighting so much, he should try it at the gym. So Godfrey started hitching rides with the Estradas to Peter Manfredo Sr.'s gym in nearby Pawtucket. Godfrey quickly realized he had a natural ability for avoiding punches. Within a few years, Godfrey was winning national amateur titles and giving up all the other sports he'd cherished before that scrap outside of the rec center.

"Since then I've been on top of the world," Godfrey said. "I've never looked back."

The 26-year-old solidified his standing as a rising force in the cruiserweight division April 6 with a second-round stoppage of fringe contender Felix Cora Jr. in an ESPN2-televised main event. At 15-0 (9), the crafty boxer-puncher has yet to crack into THE RING ratings, but each of the three major alphabet bodies already have listed Godfrey in their top 10.

Premature? Maybe. Godfrey's only been a pro for three years, and we'd like to see him handle another legit contender before placing him among the division's elite. But from what Godfrey's shown thus far, he's ready for darn near anyone in the top 10.

The blowout of Cora was his second straight impressive showing on ESPN. Last May, he blew out unbeaten prospect Shaun George in one round. Godfrey also has a second-round stoppage of veteran Ernest Mateen and a comfortable 12-round win against trialhorse Danny Batchelder on his resume.

Though he has to eat to get to the division limit of 200 pounds, the 6' Godfrey feels he's a small heavyweight competing at cruiser. He said that gives him a physical advantage over his opponents, though he can use his hand speed, defense, and ring smarts to pile up points.

"He's an all-around good fighter, not an all-around great fighter," Hallenbeck explained. "He has good skills in every area there is: ability, endurance, power, speed. He's not perfect in just one. If he knows he can't knock a kid out, he'll be able to outpunch him, outsmart him."

Against the lefty Cora, 18-2-2 (9), Godfrey surprised many by switching to a southpaw stance. It seemed to confuse Cora, Godfrey's roommate at the 2000 U.S. Olympic Trials,

*(Continued on 90)*

## Pro Record

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2004** | | |
| May 14 | Glen Morgan, Providence, RI | W 4 |
| June 12 | Fitzroy Henry, Mashantucket, CT | KO 1 |
| July 20 | Charles Tucker, Joplin, MO | KO 1 |
| July 27 | Chris Riley, Tampa, FL | W 4 |
| Oct. 1 | Andrew Hutchinson, Boston, MA | KO 4 |
| Oct. 10 | Joe Johnson, Mashantucket | KO 4 |
| **2005** | | |
| April 17 | Tony De La Garza, New Haven, CT | KO 1 |
| June 17 | Jermell Barnes, Providence | W 8 |
| Aug. 26 | Willie Herring, Providence | W 10 |
| Nov. 23 | Billy Wise, Providence | W 6 |
| **2006** | | |
| Feb. 13 | Ernest Mateen, Providence | KO 2 |
| May 10 | Shaun George, Mashantucket | KO 1 |
| Sept. 23 | Danny Batchelder, Hartford, CT | W 12 |
| Dec. 1 | Lloyd Bryan, Providence | KO 4 |
| **2007** | | |
| April 6 | Felix Cora Jr., Uncasville, CT | KO 2 |

| FIGHTS | WON | LOST | DRAW | KOs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 9 |

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

# Camera Clicks

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*If you think Manny Pacquiao is popular in America, that's nothing compared to the rabid response he gets in the Philippines, where his fans filled arenas throughout the country to watch his win over Jorge Solis on giant TV screens. Everybody leapt to their feet to celebrate Pac-Man's eighth-round knockout ... except the guy in the middle, who apparently thought he was attending a different sporting event and was highly disappointed not to be seeing Kobe Bryant.*

*It was billed as Henry Maske vs. Virgil Hill, but it turned into Henry Maske vs. Crimson Mask after an eighth-round clash of heads gave Hill a nasty gash above his left eye. Or perhaps we should go with Henry Maske vs. Tragedy Mask, given the unhappy look on Hill's face (a look normally reserved for viewers of a Hill fight rather than for the fighter himself).*

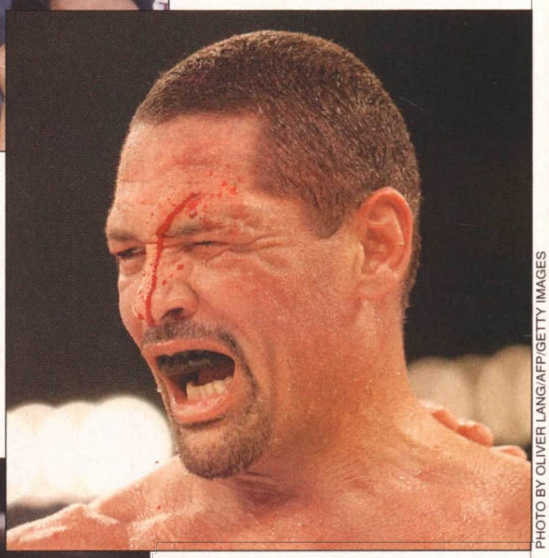


PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Do you think this is Shannon Briggs' way of promising he isn't going to weigh 268 pounds again when he fights Sultan Ibragimov in June? Nobody has ever accused Briggs of having a skeleton-like physique, but considering his orange dreadlocks, we can't say we're surprised to learn he has unique taste in fashion.*

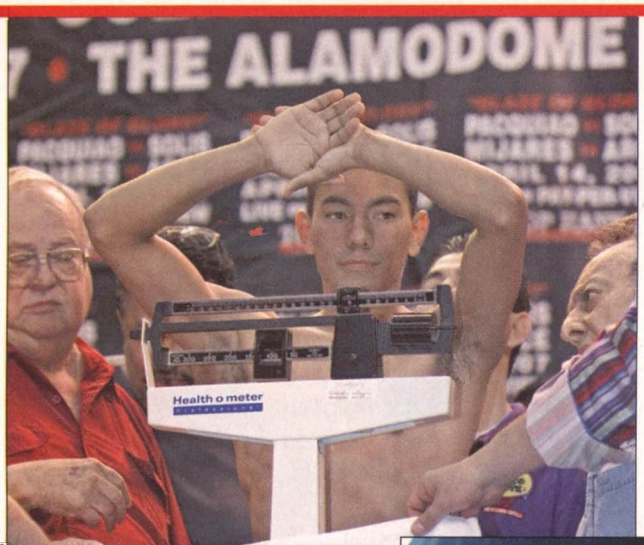



PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Sometimes we're disappointed to see a white towel thrown in, other times we're relieved; file this one under the latter category. Cristian Mijares left himself with no wiggle room to make weight for his April fight against Jorge Arce, but after stripping naked, he did indeed make the 115-pound limit. (By the way, how unfair is it that we've never seen Laila Ali, Mia St. John, or Elena Reid need to go to these lengths to make weight?)*

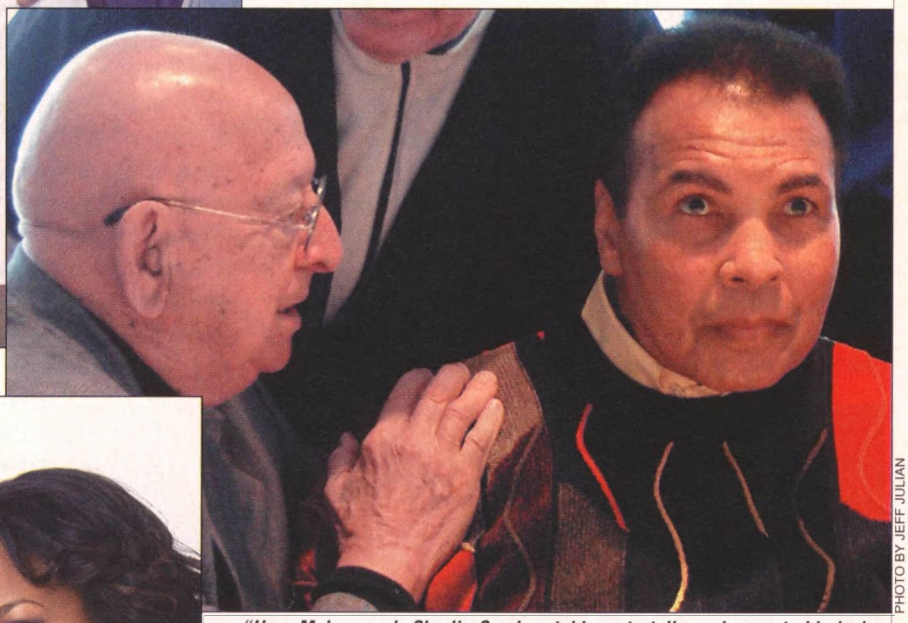


PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN

*"Hey, Muhammad, Charlie Sanders told me to tell you he wants his lucky sweater back." In a world in which trainers ditch fighters and fighters ditch trainers every day, it's nice to see one fighter-trainer team that's stuck together year in and year out, Angelo Dundee and Muhammad Ali. Let's just hope the partnership between Ali and that sweater doesn't last quite as long.*

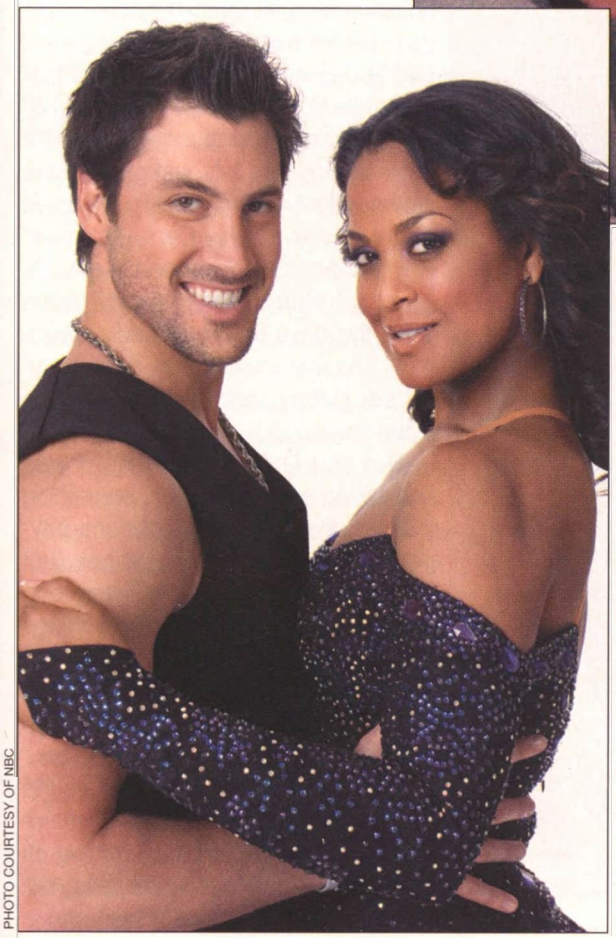


PHOTO COURTESY OF NBC

*Rumba, young woman, rumba! Along with partner Maksim Chmerkovskiy, Laila Ali has been kicking butt on the new season of Dancing With The Stars, doing especially well in the rumba, where the tandem scored a 28 out of a possible 30. Laila's involvement in the show is all well and good and will earn her valuable exposure, but there's only one dance partner we really want to see her with, and that's Ann Wolfe.*

By Jeff Ryan

# Circuit Breaker

To look back wistfully at the era when boxing's biggest battles played on closed-circuit television in movie theaters and arenas is not to lament the passing of the rotary phone, the eight-track tape, and the chance to watch *American Bandstand* on a black-and-white Zenith. It doesn't identify one as being blatantly un-hip, mentally unstable, or likely to still be harboring crushes on Marcia Brady and Laurie Partridge. No, waxing nostalgic over something is never bad. (Neither is waxing any part of Nicolay Valuev's upper body, for that matter.)

What's the matter? You can't believe that words like "wistfully" and "waxing nostalgic over" are being used on the same page with the words, "closed-circuit television," right? Well, they are. In light of the Manny Pacquiao-Jorge Solis and Oscar De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather telecasts appearing on a lot of fight connoisseurs' pay-per-view invoices this spring, the concept of paying to watch fights on a screen was on my mind this month. And the more your columnist thought about it, the more he realized he missed (yes, actually *missed*) closed-circuit.

No, folks, my closed-circuit experiences weren't any rosier than yours, believe me. Gripes and grumbles were all that ever came out of my mouth back in those days when the devil got the better of the gods of boxing, and we were forced to trudge to odd venues to overpay for a shaky signal, garbled sound, and a picture that was as murky as the contents of a spit bucket after a 15-rounder that went the distance. Not to mention sit in a crowd that seemed to be made up largely of parolees and asylum escapees.

My highlights of Sugar Ray Leonard-Roberto Duran I at a high school gym were a black-and-white picture and butt-blistering wooden bleacher seats that faced away from the screen. Leonard-Duran II, at Convention Hall in Bruce Springsteen's old haunt of Asbury Park, New Jersey, featured a chair-tossing, pre-telecast brawl in the crowd. (Best prelim ever, but darned scary.) And during Larry Holmes-Gerry Cooney, the sound went off, never to return. (Unfortunately, those were the days before closed-captioning.) The living room with a six-pack, a best buddy, and a three-topping pizza it wasn't.

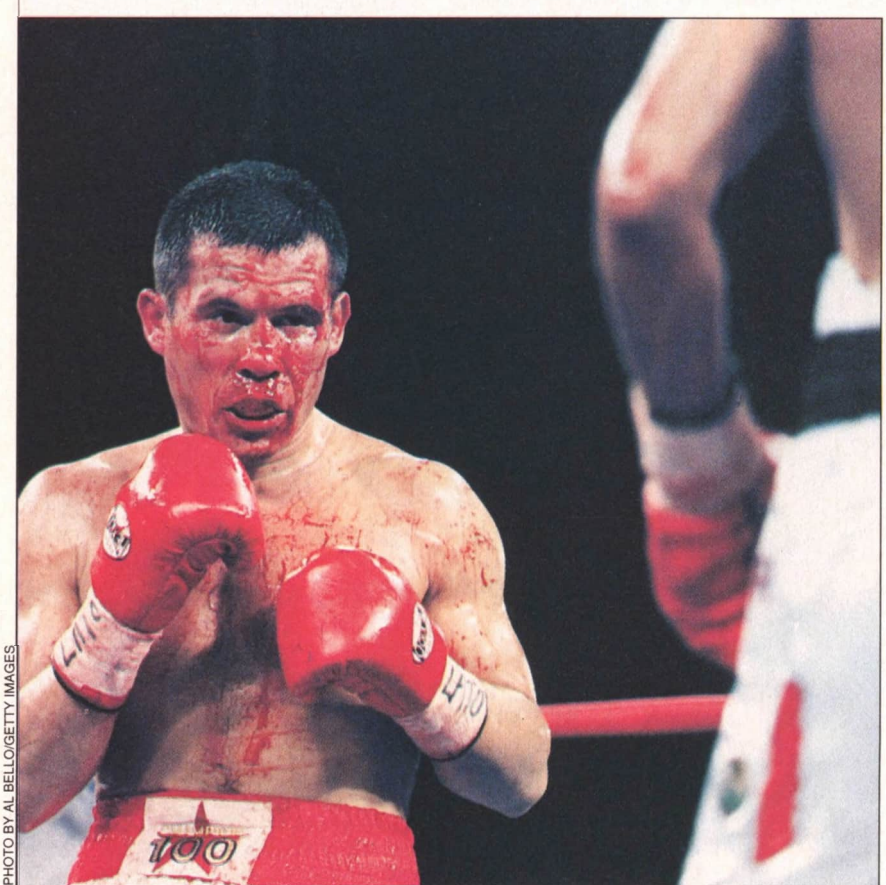
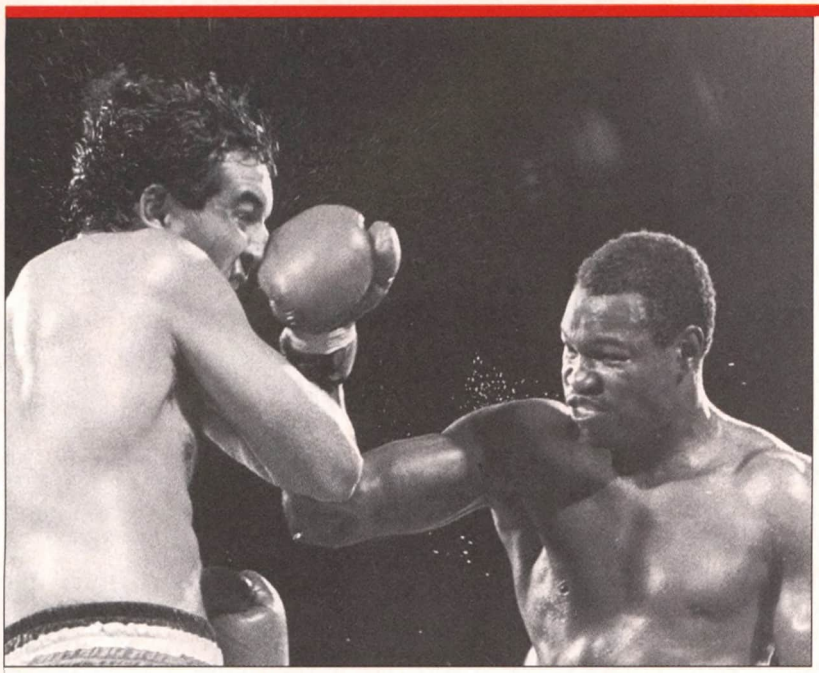


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

*Chavez' bloody face excited the closed-circuit crowd*

But you know what? There was something special about it, something that didn't dawn on me until one pay-per-view telecast after another (not fight, mind you, but telecast) started to look the same. One of the cool things about closed-circuit was that it was always the next-best thing to being at the actual fight. A lot of folks even referred to it as "going to the fights." You didn't just flip the TV dial to the Leonard-Thomas Hearns showdown in '81 after walking the dog, getting off the phone with Mom, or climbing out of the shower. You had to plan, get in



*"The white man only wins in the movies!"*

the car or on the train or on the bus, and go to it. And when you got to the theater/drive-in/arena/catering hall/armory, there stood a boisterous throng that set a tone you and your friends couldn't re-create in your rec room if you had an instruction manual. Depending on the venue, T-shirts and programs might even be for sale. Sometimes you had to be shown to your seat.

Sure, there are plenty of forgettable closed-circuit escapades, but also some fun memories. There was Muhammad Ali showing up with a bullhorn outside the Ritz Theater in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1973 to hype his closed-circuit rematch with Ken Norton, strangers hugging strangers when Sugar rallied to stop the "Hit Man," fans trying to sneak into a drive-in showing Ali-George Foreman by hiding in car trunks and under camping equipment, tarps, and other junk in the backs of station wagons, a surprisingly passive crowd erupting like a volcano at the sight of Julio Cesar Chavez' cut during De La Hoya-Chavez I, and a black fan who was leaving Holmes-Cooney (which took place during the time of *Rocky III*), boldly announcing to the crowd, "The white man only wins in the movies!"

With its myriad technical problems and the fact that a small screen was often set up in a large building, closed-circuit did indeed create a detachment. Watching pay-per-view at home or in a small bar, you hear everything that's going on. Even at those closed-circuit telecasts with good sound, however, the crowd noise often made it impossible to catch what the broadcasters were saying. But in retrospect, maybe that wasn't all bad.

Though many people falsely claim to have been there, yours truly actually was at Yankee Stadium on July 24, 1983, for what has come to be known as the infamous "Pine Tar Game." My seat behind first base provided me with an excellent view of the Kansas City Royals' George Brett charging out of his dugout, melting down and having to be restrained from going after the umpires, and the Yankees celebrating. But that's not my lingering memory of that day. My mind instead flashes back to dozens of us fans jamming the 161st Street subway platform a few minutes later, hovering around a guy with a radio, and trying to find out what had actually occurred.

A vital part of the experience of Duran's "No Mas" was frantically punching the radio buttons on the drive home in an attempt to find out why he quit. Hearing that there was controversy about manager Dennis Rappaport's between-rounds pep talks to Cooney, but not knowing quite what was said, added an element of suspense that kept that fight's fire burning a bit longer. World Series games are all televised in prime time these days. But it's the afternoon games during the '30s, '40s, '50s, '60s, and '70s, the ones that required kids to sneak radios into class or assembly line workers to pass notes to each other for updates, that are the stuff of legend.

In the closed-circuit era, you knew how big an event was just by where it played. Theaters only? Some demand. Theaters and wedding reception halls? Good interest. Theaters and 18,000-seat arenas? A superfight. At Madison Square Garden, it was common to have a small live card open for the closed-circuit telecast. After four or five live bouts, a four-sided screen would be lowered from the ceiling, juicing up the masses.

Closed-circuit viewing is a lot like going to high school. You thought it sucked until you didn't get to do it anymore. Yes, pay-per-view allows one to enjoy the action in the oft-stated "comforts of home," but don't people do enough there already? Movie theater outings have been replaced by DVD rentals. Grocery shopping can be done online now with the string beans and Twinkies delivered right to one's door. E-mail makes it unnecessary to even walk across the street to mail a letter.

Though loathe to admit it, your columnist must confess to having stretched out on the couch a time or two for a pay-per-view shootout and fallen asleep. During closed-circuit telecasts, though, whether it was because the punching exchanges were so scintillating, there was a fear that the thug in the row behind me was going to pick my pocket, or the plank we were sitting on was slipping a disk in my back, there was never, ever, a snoring controversy. ■

By Ivan Goldman

# Golden Boy: Is New Always Better?

Golden Boy, the promotional colossus owned and operated by honest-to-God fighters, was supposed to provide us with a squeaky-clean batch of trusted good guys to take over from the bad old guys who used to run boxing. But if Golden Boy is the future, in some ways the future looks an awful lot like the past. The press conference that followed Golden Boy fighter Juan Manuel Marquez' victory over Golden Boy partner Marco Antonio Barrera was one ugly indicator. You might find more even-handed proceedings in a North Korean courtroom.

Barrera's team took all the time they wanted to complain about the decision, turning the proceedings into a lovefest for the loser. And yes, the fight was close, and marred by the referee *(see Magoos below).* But that didn't give Golden Boy partner Bernard Hopkins a license to drown Marquez' victory at birth. He wouldn't even allow a minute for Marquez's trainer-manager Nacho Beristain to speak. Unspeakable. Beristain, one of the most talented, accomplished trainers on the

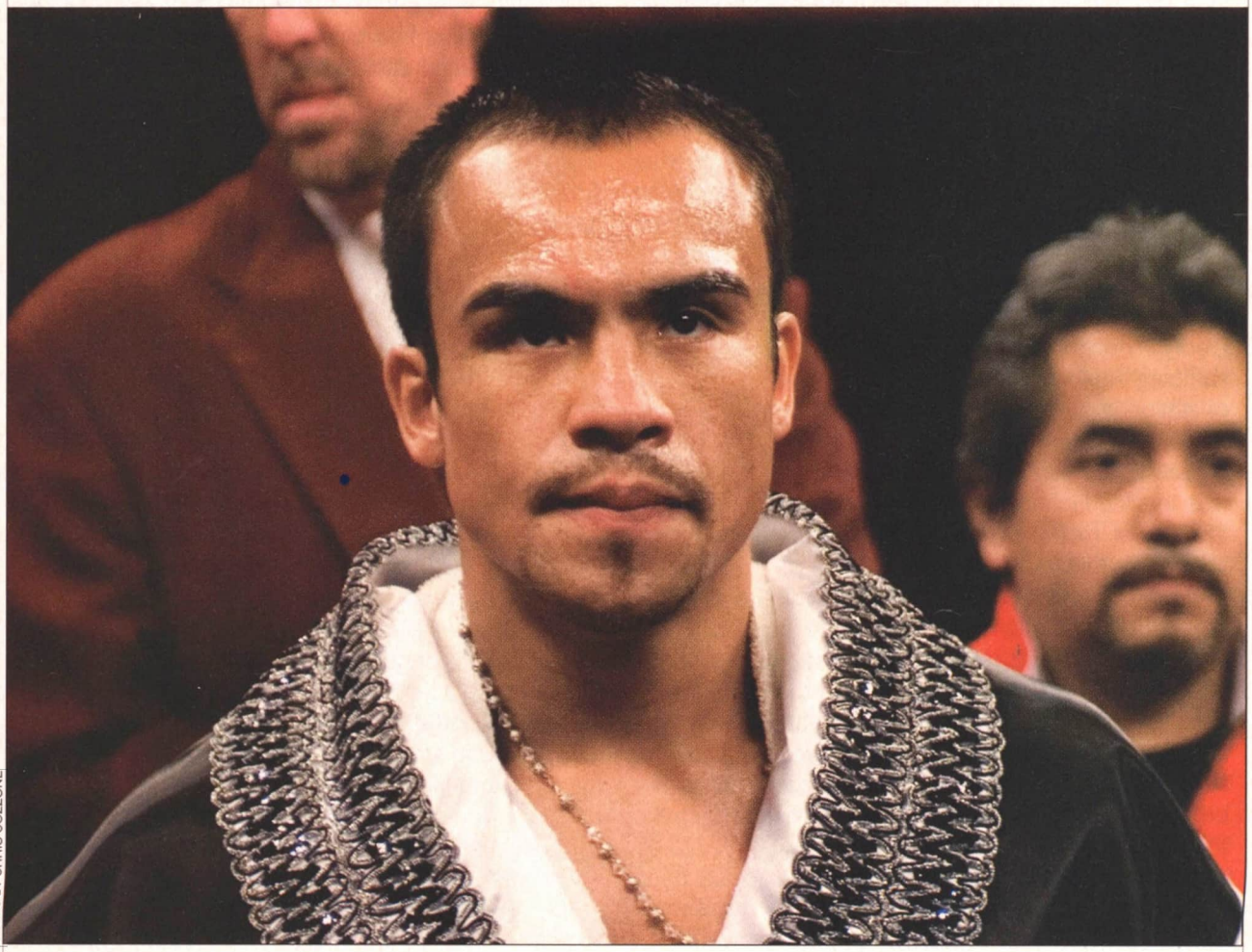


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

***Why did Hopkins pull the plug on Marquez?***

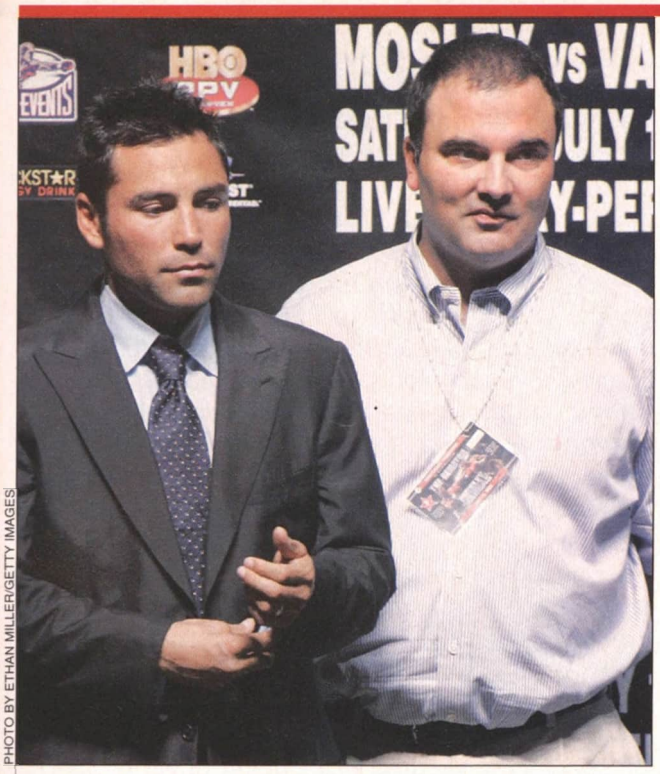



PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

*Golden Boy honchos De La Hoya and Schaefer*

planet, was treated like yesterday's chopped liver.

I can't recall ever seeing the winner of such a tough, important fight treated with so little respect. The travesty ended with a final insult. Marquez spoke thoughtfully in Spanish in reply to a question, and Hopkins jumped in, closing the show without allowing the statement to be translated.

If you need somebody to throw a Puerto Rican flag to the floor in a room packed with Puerto Ricans and get out of there alive, Hopkins is your man. But if you want to run a press conference with tact, diplomacy, and even-handedness, you don't let him near the podium. Shane Mosley, another partner on the scene, would have been perfect for the role. But Mosley is like the George Harrison of the '60s Beatles—too easy-going to jump in and share center stage with his partners. Oscar De La Hoya was off training in Puerto Rico, and chief exec Richard Schaefer did nothing I could see to bring events back to an even keel.

Most postfight press conferences are only a little more exciting than sewer commission meetings, but every once in a while something memorable takes place. Floyd Mayweather breaks into tears, for example (after he defeated Carlos Baldomir). Then there was the time somebody pulled the plug on Don King's microphone in a press conference sponsored by Bob Arum's Top Rank. King, whose voice has the power of 10 even without amplification, became so upset he actually shut up before stalking off and hastily calling his own press conference the next day. The second worst thing you can do to King is to turn off his microphone. The absolute worst is to turn off a camera.

The electronic sabotage was perpetrated after Oscar got robbed against Felix Trinidad. It's almost hard to even remember the days when De La Hoya and Arum were a team. But back then, Arum, in defense of his fighter, appeared ready to mix it up with King. Their aides stepped in to prevent a senior-citizen dust-up.

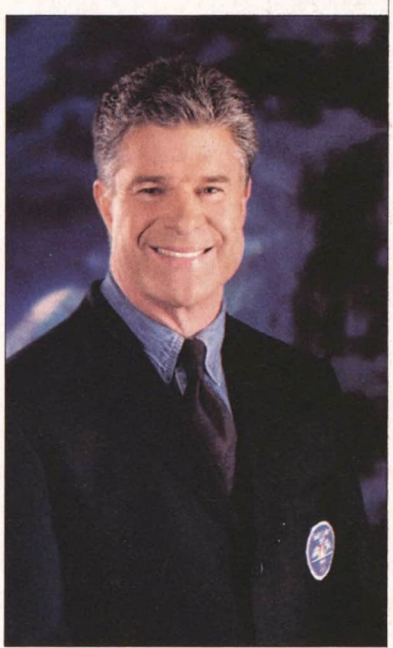
Nowadays Arum and De La Hoya are on the same terms as fire and ice, with fighters like Marquez and Manny Pacquiao caught in the middle. But King and "the biggest Jew out of Harvard," as Oscar once famously called Arum, (I guess that makes me a 160-pound Jew out of Southern Illinois University) do business together when it's called for.

To put the Golden Boy-Top Rank feud into perspective, note that in Northern Ireland, Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley, two enemies whose pals were *shooting* at each other just a few years ago, were forming a joint government.

Years ago Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and other artists were sick of the way tyrannical studios ran Hollywood. So they created a distinct new kind of studio that would allow talent to run the show instead of the suits. After a few decades, that studio, United Artists, got swallowed into the Hollywood machinery and ended up looking and behaving exactly like all the others. It appears Golden Boy won't require decades to make the same kind of transformation in the boxing world.

If I were a fighter and had designs on a match with partners Mosley, Barrera, Hopkins, or De La Hoya, I wouldn't sign with Golden Boy unless Luca Brazi were holding a gun to my head.

**Clarification:** In an earlier column, I commended HBO for keeping Jim Lampley on the team after he was "charged with domestic violence against his girlfriend." Lampley subsequently pointed out to me that the District Attorney's Office charged him only with violating a



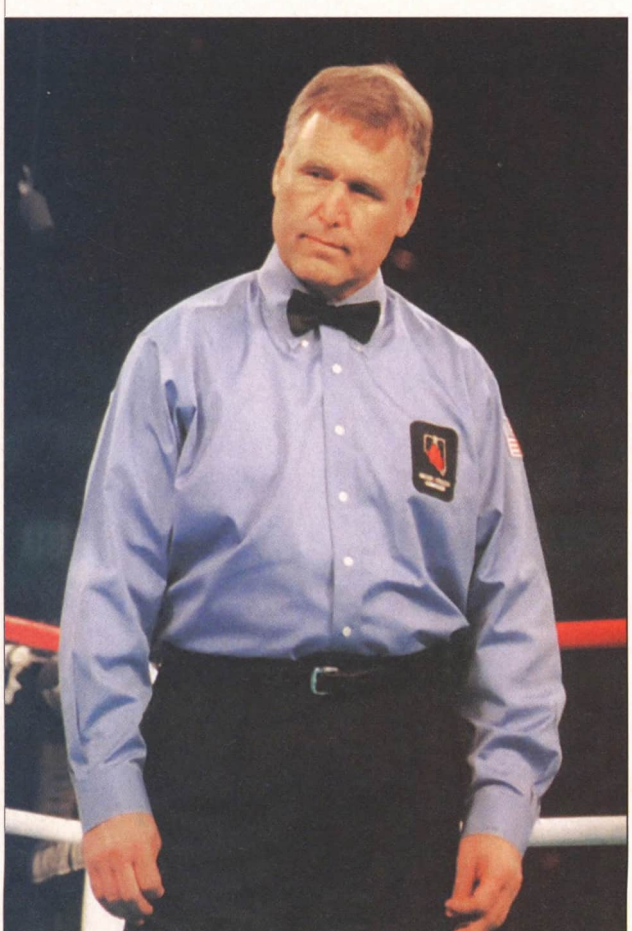
*Lampley: Bad timing*

court order, to which he pleaded no-contest.

I'd written the item before the D.A. had made its determination, and police had booked him for three offenses, one of them domestic violence. Two of the police charges couldn't be substantiated after what appeared to be a thorough investigation.

The dictionary defines "book" as "to enter an official charge against (an arrested suspect) on a police register." That's why I used the word "charged," as do lots of news media under those circumstances. But in a strict legal sense a "charge" can emanate only from prosecuting authorities, not the cops.

Nowadays when someone tells police their spouse or significant other committed domestic violence, police often follow a zero tolerance policy and file charges even when they disbelieve the claim. Lampley pleaded no-contest to violating a court order, he explained, "because I had indeed come to within 100 yards of my apartment" to persuade his landlords not to evict his former girlfriend. "My misfortune was to walk into the arms of two sheriff's detectives who were there to interview her at that time." Talk about bad timing.



*Nady: Yet another bad night*

**Magoos 1, 2:** Does referee Jay Nady, who stopped Zab Judah-Kostya Tszyu too soon and Fernando Vargas-Felix Trinidad too late, get a Magoo for failing to notice the punch from Barrera that knocked down Marquez in the seventh round? You bet your blind spot. Nady appeared to be looking right at it. Just as important, he failed to get Barrera over to another corner, giving him ample time to stand over Marquez and measure him for an illegal punch. Barrera also gets a Magoo. He had plenty of time to think about that shot to the head, and it was unpardonable to hit a downed opponent even after the ref gave him plenty of time to reconsider.

Does the Nevada commission earn a Magoo for continuing to give Nady the big fights? No. Because that particular official belongs in the spotlight where everyone can view his handiwork. Otherwise, he'd be in dark corners screwing up little four-rounders almost no one sees but that in most cases mean just as much to the participating fighters as pay-per-view blockbusters do to world-class fighters. Clearly, we're never going to get rid of Nady or Dalby Shirley or the rest of Nevada's unique cast of impersonators, so why not let the whole world in on whatever the hell it is they think they're doing?

**Magoos 3, 4, 5:** No, Peter Manfredo had no business being in the same ring with quick-handed sharpshooter Joe Calzaghe, but that doesn't mean we can write off the entire *Contender* crew. Though I'm no fan of that show or any other bogus "reality" series, allow me to point out that three weeks earlier in—where else? Las Vegas—*Contender* alumnus Stevie Forbes looked sharp but got jobbed against Demetrius Hopkins. Not that Forbes won for sure (I had him by one point), but the lopsided scores had the outraged Mandalay Bay crowd once again yelling about bull excrement. Magoos to Robert Hoyle, Glenn Towbridge (both 118-110), and good ol' Dalby Shirley (117-111).

Incidentally, Forbes is a class act who accepted his fate with more maturity and calm than most of us could muster under the circumstances. He thought he won, he said, "and when you win you can't feel sad."

Back to Manfredo-Calzaghe: Was that an early stoppage by panicked referee Terry O'Connor, who apparently failed to notice Manfredo was slipping and blocking most of Calzaghe's final volleys? Yes. When a fighter's deflecting punches with that degree of finesse, he can't possibly be seriously hurt. Give him more time to offer up some offense. But there are no Magoos for early stoppages because they pressure referees in the wrong direc-

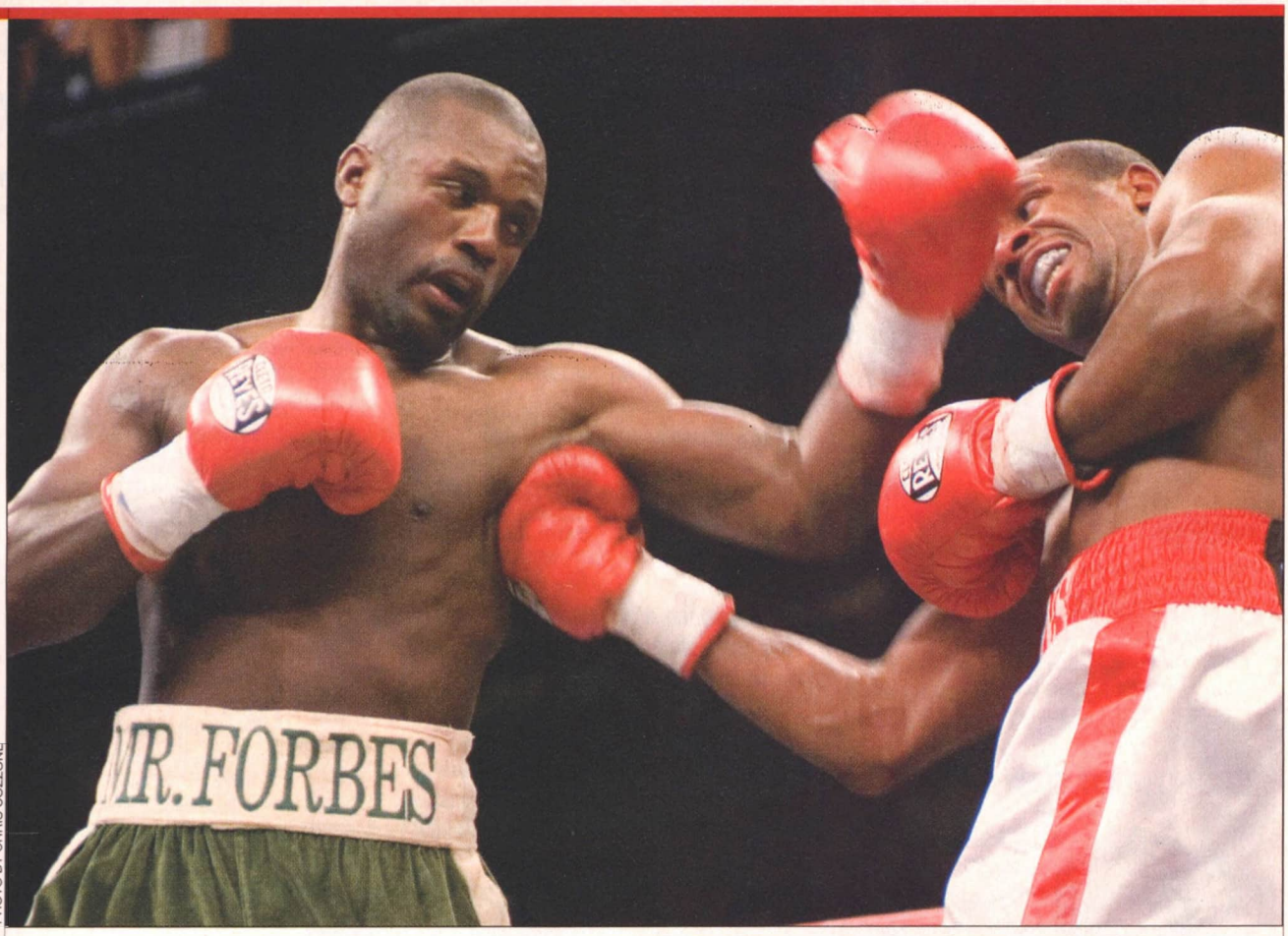



PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

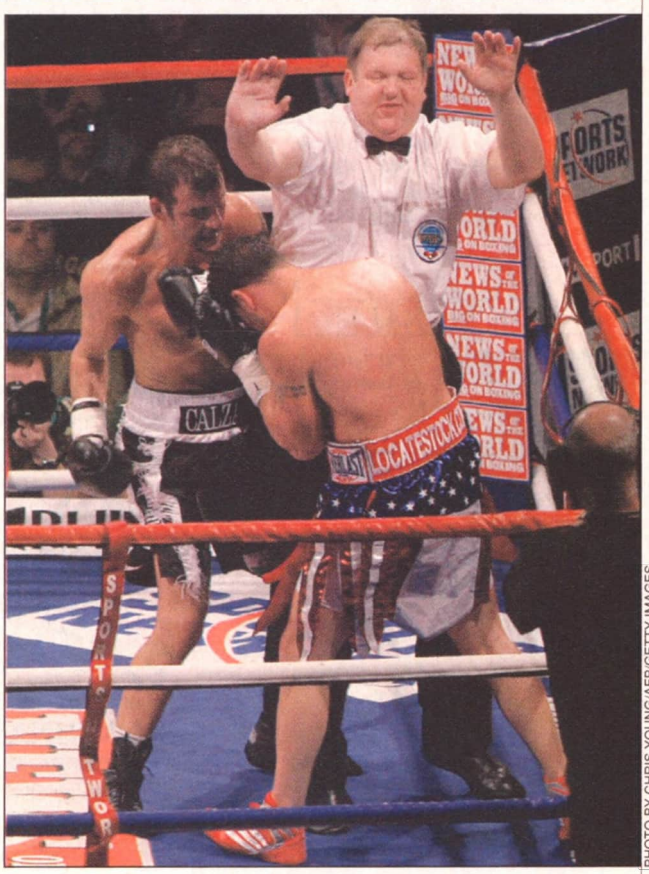
*Forbes showed class both during and after Hopkins fight*

tion. Premature stoppages are unfair, but don't lead to emergency brain surgery.

**Magoos 6, 7, 8:** Same card as Hopkins-Forbes. Nelson Vazquez and Chuck Giampa had it 119-109 for Daniel Ponce De Leon over Filipino Gerry Penalosa. Dave Moretti's 120-108 was the final touch. Penalosa, after braving the early storm, outquicked and outslicked De Leon. What an ugly night in Vegas.

**Next For Calzaghe:** Within days of Calzaghe's victory, his promoter, Frank Warren, issued a press release offering Jermain Taylor $4-million to come to the U.K. and face Calzaghe using an American referee. But negotiators really seeking a deal do their talking behind closed doors. When the offer's made in a press release, you have to wonder what's being left out, just as when newspapers quote a mother saying her son was "always a good boy," you can bet he was just caught coming out of a liquor store with a sawed-off shotgun and the contents of the cash register.

But after Calzaghe drew 35,018 fans to see him against Manfredo in Cardiff, Wales, you can't blame his team for figuring he's earned home field advantage. ■



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*Panicky O'Connor makes his move too soon*

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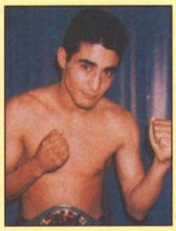

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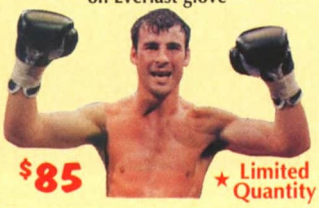

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★ Michael Carbajal
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
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★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Vito Antuofermo
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez
★ James "Buster" Douglas
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★ Gene Fullmer
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★ Hector "Macho" Camacho

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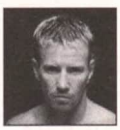

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# Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended May 7, 2007

**Heavyweights:** Ruslan Chagaev vaults from nine to four after his decision victory over Nicolay Valuev (fourth last issue). Valuev drops to six, dropping one place each Sergei Liakhovich (sixth last issue), Lamon Brewster (seventh last issue), and James Toney (eighth last issue).

**Cruiserweights:** No changes.

**Light heavyweights:** No changes.

**Super middleweights:** Sakio Bika enters at 10, replacing Peter Manfredo.

**Middleweights:** Felix Sturm (seventh last issue) jumps to four after his rematch victory over Javier Castillejo (fourth last issue), who falls to five. Amin Asikainen (fifth last issue) and Sam Soliman (sixth last issue) fall one place each.

**Junior middleweights:** Floyd Mayweather debuts at three, followed by Oscar De La Hoya (fifth last issue), who moves up one place, based on their close fight. The inclusion of Mayweather drops Kassim Ouma (third last issue) and Sergei Dzindziruk (fourth last issue) each two places. Everyone from six to nine moves down one rung each, forcing out Joachim Alcine (10th last issue).

**Welterweights:** Joshua Clottey moves to eight, thanks to a decision over Diego Corrales. Oktay Urkal (eighth last issue) drops to ninth. Arturo Gatti (ninth last issue) exits to make room for Clottey.

**Junior welterweights:** No changes.

**Lightweights:** No changes.

**Junior lightweights:** Edwin Valero (seventh last issue) and Jorge Barrios (sixth last issue) switch places. Rocky Juarez (ninth last issue) will campaign at featherweight, moving Vicente Mosquera (10th last issue) to nine, while Alex Arthur regains the number-10 spot.

**Featherweights:** Roberto Guerrero (fifth last issue) vaults to three after stopping Spend Abazi. Rodolfo Lopez (third last issue) and Takashi Koshimoto (fourth last issue) depart after suffering losses. Everyone from six to eight moves up two spots each, while Naoki Matsuda debuts at seven thanks to his victory over Lopez. Martin Honorio (ninth last issue) and Oscar Larios (10th last issue) each climb one place, and Rocky Juarez enters at 10.

**Junior featherweights:** Rey Bautista debuts at six, after scoring an impressive decision over Sergio Manuel Medina (sixth last issue). Bautista's inclusion drops everyone from six to nine one place, ousting Gerry Penalosa (10th last issue) from the ratings.

**Bantamweights:** Irene Pacheco (eighth last issue) announced his retirement after getting stopped by fifth-ranked Jhonny Gonzalez. Simone Maludrottu (ninth last issue) and Poonsawat Kratingaenggym (10th last issue) move up one place, making room for Anselmo Moreno to debut at 10.

**Junior bantamweights:** Alexander Munoz (sixth last issue) jumps to two after beating Nobuo Nashiro (first last issue), who drops to three. Martin Castillo (second last issue) moves to the number one slot.

**Flyweights:** Koki Kameda takes the place of Wandee Singwangcha at 10.

**Junior flyweights:** Daniel Reyes debuts at three after beating Nelson Dieppa (third last issue), who drops to six. Omar Nino (fifth last issue) moves to four after Brian Viloria (fifth last issue) lost a majority decision to Edgar Sosa. Sosa vaults from nine to five. Viloria drops to seven, Jose Aguirre (sixth last issue) to eight, and Omar Salado (eighth last issue) sinks to nine. Giovanni Segura departs at 10, and is replaced by Munetsugu Kayo.

**Strawweights:** Daniel Reyes (sixth last issue) departs for junior flyweight and Isaac Bustos (eighth last issue) leaves after consecutive losses. Rodel Mayol (seventh last issue) moves to six, while Eriberto Gejon (ninth last issue) and Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym (10th last issue) each jump up two slots. Oleydong Sithsamerchai debuts at nine and Ronald Barrera at 10.

**Pound-for-pound:** No changes.

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## Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight/Junior Middleweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
4. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
6. **Jermain Taylor**
   Middleweight
7. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
8. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
9. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
10. **Ricky Hatton**
    Junior Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

# The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended May 7, 2007

## How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

PHOTO BY SANDRA BEHNE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

*Ruslan Chagaev climbs to fourth at heavyweight after beating Nicolay Valuev*

## Heavyweights

*Weight Unlimited*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 48-3 (43)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 28-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 23-0-1 (17)
5. **SHANNON BRIGGS** Brooklyn, NY 48-4-1 (42)
6. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 46-1 (34)
7. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
8. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
9. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-6-3 (43)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-7-1 (28)

## Jr. Middleweights

*Weight Limit: 154 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-3 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 35-2-1 (22)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
5. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 25-3-1 (15)
6. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 33-0 (21)
7. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 38-2 (28)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-0 (19)
9. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
10. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)

## Featherweights

*Weight Limit: 126 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 39-0-1 (20)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
3. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 20-2-1 (13)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 26-0-1 (19)
5. **NICKY COOK** England 27-0 (15)
6. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
7. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 27-7-3 (10)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 23-3-1 (12)
9. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 59-5-1 (37)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 28-3 (19)

## Jr. Featherweights

*Weight Limit: 122 pounds*

**Champ: RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-3 (33)

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 26-2 (18)
2. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 41-4 (31)
3. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 29-1-2 (19)
4. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 49-2-1 (40)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 31-1 (28)
6. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 23-0 (18)
7. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 28-1 (16)
8. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
9. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 23-0 (9)
10. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 27-3 (17)

## Bantamweights

*Weight Limit: 118 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 22-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 55-3-2 (40)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 19-0-2 (6)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 19-2 (15)
5. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 34-5 (29)
6. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 67-9 (44)
7. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-5 (20)
8. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-1 (10)
9. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 27-1 (18)
10. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 19-1-1 (7)

## Cruiserweights

*Weight Limit: 200 pounds*

**Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 33-3 (22)

1. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 37-1 (27)
3. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-1 (10)
4. **DAVID HAYE**
England 19-1 (18)
5. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 23-0-1 (16)
6. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 26-1 (20)
7. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 26-3-1 (18)
8. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 18-0 (13)
9. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 15-0 (11)
10. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 21-5 3(18)

## Light Heavyweights

*Weight Limit: 175 pounds*

**Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 47-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 26-0 (16)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 24-4 (18)
3. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 40-3-1 (24)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 44-11-2 (29)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 24-0 (15)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 31-1 (21)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
8. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 50-4 (38)
9. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-3 (25)
10. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 28-2 (15)

## Super Middleweights

*Weight Limit: 168 pounds*

**Champ: JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 43-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-0 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 28-3 (22)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 22-1 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-3-1 (13)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 24-1 (18)
6. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 19-0 (16)
7. **CARL FROCH**
England 21-0 (17)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 23-1 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 30-0 (23)
10. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 22-2-2 (14)

## Middleweights

*Weight Limit: 160 pounds*

**Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 26-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-3-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 22-0 (17)
3. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 28-1 (24)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 27-2 (12)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (41)
6. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 20-0 (14)
7. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 33-9 (13)
8. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 25-2 (11)
9. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 30-0 (27)
10. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (4)

## Welterweights

*Weight Limit: 147 pounds*

**Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 34-4 (24)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-4 (37)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 29-0 (24)
4. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
Argentina 43-10-6 (13)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
6. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 27-1 (25)
8. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 31-2 (19)
9. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)
10. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 32-0 (24)

## Jr. Welterweights

*Weight Limit: 140 pounds*

**Champ: RICKY HATTON**
England 42-0 (30)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 55-7-1 (47)
2. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 35-1-2 (20)
3. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-2-1 (18)
4. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 44-8-1 (29)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 35-1-1 (20)
6. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
7. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 26-0-1 (10)
8. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 22-1 (12)
9. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Canada 15-1 (9)
10. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Germany 27-2-1 (12)

## Lightweights

*Weight Limit: 135 pounds*

**Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 34-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 32-0 (16)
2. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-3 (25)
3. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 32-1-1 (17)
4. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 30-5-1 (24)
5. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 24-1-1 (14)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-2 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-4 (29)
8. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 24-2 (13)
9. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 22-0 (20)
10. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 18-2 (12)

## Jr. Lightweights

*Weight Limit: 130 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 44-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 47-3-1 (35)
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 63-5 (42)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 27-0 (17)
5. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-5 (34)
6. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 22-0 (22)
7. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
8. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 41-5-2 (25)
9. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-2-1 (12)
10. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 24-1 (18)

## Jr. Bantamweights

*Weight Limit: 115 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-2 (16)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 30-2 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 9-1 (5)
4. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 31-3-2 (12)
5. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 24-1 (15)
6. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 33-2-1 (24)
7. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 46-4-1 (35)
8. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 30-6 (20)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 25-2 (11)
10. **PRAMUANSAK POSUWAN**
Thailand 36-1-1 (20)

## Flyweights

*Weight Limit: 112 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 65-2 (34)
2. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 28-0 (22)
3. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 24-0-2 (15)
4. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-1 (17)
5. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 30-4-1 (15)
6. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 21-2 (8)
7. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 36-1-1 (28)
8. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 30-2-2 (19)
9. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
10. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 14-0 (10)

## Jr. Flyweights

*Weight Limit: 108 pounds*

**Champ: HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 25-3-1 (19)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 23-1-2 (17)
2. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 20-5-1 (16)
3. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 38-4-1 (30)
4. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
5. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 27-5 (14)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
7. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-2 (12)
8. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 34-5-1 (20)
9. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 15-0-2 (8)
10. **MUNETSUGU KAYO**
Japan 15-2 (8)

## Strawweights

*Weight Limit: 105 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 28-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 21-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-5-5 (31)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 17-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-3 (7)
6. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-1 (18)
7. **ERIBERTO GEJON**
Philippines 23-1-1 (13)
8. **PORNSAWAN KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand 18-0 (14)
9. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 23-0 (8)
10. **RONALD BARRERA**
Colombia 20-3-1 (12)

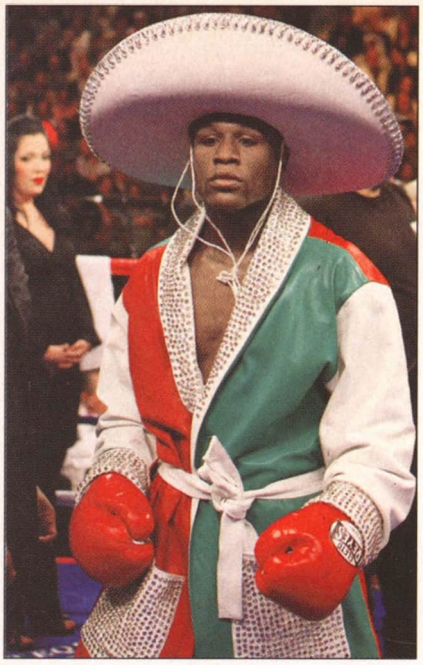
# MAYWEATHER-DE LA HOYA

## QUESTIONS ANSWERED... QUESTIONS RAISED

By Nigel Collins
PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

*What was most likely to happen—a strategic, boring decision in favor of Floyd Mayweather—was what we wanted the least. What we wanted the most—an electrifying, punch-filled battle for the ages—was the least likely. But in the end, just like Mick Jagger has been telling us for decades, sometimes, you just might get what you need.*

*Going in, it seemed likely that the Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya fight would be overshadowed by the hype or swallowed up by the event, but the quality of the struggle and the level of the athletes involved*



*Mayweather shocked the mainly pro-De La Hoya crowd by entering the ring wearing the national colors of Mexico and a sombrero. Regardless of whether the outfit was intended to inflame passions or curry favor with the large Latino contingent, it caused quite a stir, especially as he had the sombrero on backward.*

*combined to produce a fight respectable enough to appease, if not enthrall.*

*Equally important, it was a fight unencumbered by controversy, bad behavior on the part of participants or patrons, and untainted by scandal. For a change, boxing held the high ground, especially in the wake of a NBA All-Star Game weekend featuring far more disorderly conduct than even a hedonistic playpen like Las Vegas was willing to overlook.*

*Instead of its usual seedy clown costume, boxing wore a new designer suit, and even though the fight wasn't a perfect fit, there was enough substance to prevent the trousers from falling down around the sport's ankles.*

*As is often the case, Mayweather-De La Hoya answered some questions and posed new ones worthy of discussion. So let's take a closer look at the most pertinent of those questions and attempt to separate truth from fiction, illusion from reality, and, hopefully, put the fight dubbed "The World Awaits" into perspective.*

## DID THE JUDGES GET IT RIGHT?

Split decisions are seldom the most satisfying of results, but the one Mayweather received by scores of 116-112 (Chuck Giampa), 115-113 (Jerry Roth), and 113-115 (Tom Kaczmarek) was appropriate in that it represented the three most frequently voiced opinions of the fight: Mayweather won by a wide margin, Mayweather edged a close fight, and De La Hoya should have gotten the nod.

THE RING scorecard read 115-114 for Mayweather, putting us in the Mayweather-by-a-nose camp. It is not, however, difficult to make an argument for the other two viewpoints. Those who thought Mayweather pretty much dominated are reinforced by the punch stats. According to CompuBox, Mayweather landed 207 punches, compared to 122 for De La Hoya, enjoying an advantage in both jabs landed (69 to 40) and power-punch connects (138 to 82). On the other hand, De La Hoya threw over a hundred more punches (587 to 481) and was the aggressor throughout.

While it's true that the busier fighter often seems to be doing more than he actually is, a measure of credit (impossible to quantify in numerical terms) is often due the fighter who makes the fight. Imagine how boring it would have been if De La Hoya had not pressed the fight in virtually every round. This is why so many of the pro-De La Hoya crowd at the MGM Grand Garden Arena booed the decision; they saw their hero persistently in search of a fight, while his foe was more than satisfied to make it a boxing match.

Then there was the close nature of many rounds and lack of a defining moment. Nobody was knocked down, nobody was hurt, and nobody really dominated. And with the absence of any of those three elements, there was reasonable room for debate. Consequentially, a split decision seems just about perfect for the occasion, a verdict that won't please everyone, but, like the fight itself, was well within the bounds of reason.

## WHAT DID THE VICTORY MEAN FOR MAYWEATHER'S LEGACY?

No, the victory over De La Hoya did not automatically make Mayweather the best fighter of all-time, as he had preposterously proposed, or even the best fighter of his generation for that

*As early as the opening round, De La Hoya bulled Mayweather into the ropes and whipped home a series of left hooks to the body. However, if the fight plan was to sap "Pretty Boy" of his energy, it failed, as the challenger was the fresher of the two in the late rounds.*

# MAYWEATHER: AN UNSOLVABLE PUZZLE

There were two schools of thought as to how Oscar De La Hoya could best go about the task of solving the pugilistic puzzle known as "Pretty Boy Floyd." The more traditional of the two was to apply nonstop pressure, bully him into the ropes, and then wale away for all you're worth before he wiggles out of range. It was this method that Jose Luis Castillo used to good effect against Mayweather in their first fight. The other approach was for Oscar to utilize his reach advantage from the outside to offset Floyd's superior speed. De La Hoya tried a bit of both, but found only limited success with either.

In many ways, it was a fight of two parts, with De La Hoya, 154, winning the first half and Mayweather, 150, the second. The difference being that Pretty Boy did slightly better during the other man's portion of the fight than Oscar did when Floyd was in charge. It appeared as if De La Hoya's early-round aggression ate into his reserves just enough to give Mayweather the energy edge he needed to pull even and finally surge ahead down the stretch.

Age and lengthy layoffs certainly made a difference, and one couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if they had met when De La Hoya was in his welterweight prime. The De La Hoya that lost to Shane Mosley in 2000 was a superior fighter to the one who fell just a point or two short of beating Mayweather in 2007. But then was then and now is now, and on this particular Cinco de Mayo, the boxer of Mexican heritage had little to celebrate other than a near miss.

De La Hoya, 38-5 (30), had most of his best moments when he pinned Mayweather, 38-0 (24), on the ropes and flurried. He did reasonably well when pumping his left hook to the body, but never dipped at the knee sufficiently to deliver it with enough venom to seriously incapacitate his rival. Mayweather, boxing's sharpshooter supreme, gradually found a home for his straight right hand, and was landing it practically at will the final third of the fight.

While there were no knockdowns or serious damage inflicted, the brisk pace and palpable tension kept interest high. There were a few moments that stood out, notably in the fifth, when it became clear that Mayweather's right did indeed carry some kick, and in the waning moments of the last round, when De La Hoya finally found his tormentor's head with three consecutive punches. But mainly it was a high-stakes game of chase, tag, and counter tag, made more appetizing by the high degree of skill exhibited by the participants.

*De La Hoya finds Mayweather's chin with a left*

If there was a mystery to how things developed, it was the disappearance of De La Hoya's left jab, which was an effective weapon when he used it. Even Oscar couldn't explain why he abandoned it, merely saying, "For some reason it wasn't the night of the jab." When he looks at the tape, perhaps he will decide that it should have been.

The victory gave Mayweather the WBC super welterweight title to go along with the world welterweight championship he already holds. The referee was Kenny Bayless.

—N.C.

matter. But it did underline his mastery of the craft and allow him to remain at the top of today's mythical pound-for-pound hierarchy. "Pretty Boy" is a marvelous boxer who has achieved much, but beating De La Hoya did not elevate him to legendary status. In order to become a legend, a fighter must overcome a perilous brush with disaster or do something nobody else has ever done. Against De La Hoya, Mayweather did neither.

So far, no opponent has been good enough to seriously threaten Mayweather's unbeaten record, though on the scorecards, at least, De La Hoya came the closest. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that beating De La Hoya is not a unique accomplishment. He'd already lost to Shane Mosley (twice), Bernard Hopkins, and Felix Trinidad. Moreover, the aforementioned trio beat a younger, closer-to-his prime "Golden Boy," while Mayweather beat an older, part-time fighter who has paid far more attention to his business empire in recent years than he has to fighting.

Still, Mayweather came away from the fight with a much higher Q-rating than before. His bratty behavior and bizarre relationship with his dysfunctional family was so widely exposed by the prefight hype, he emerged with a strong public identity that he had previously lacked. Thanks to this fight,

PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Although De La Hoya's left jab worked well when he used it, Mayweather eventually out-jabbed him by a 69 to 40 margin. Overall, Pretty Boy landed a total of 207 punches, compared to 122 for De La Hoya.*

Mayweather has moved out of the pack of faceless fighters and into the sporting mainstream.

That Mayweather fought his usual fight and refused to be drawn into the sort of punchout that De La Hoya and the fans would have preferred should not be held against him. Even so, his conservative approach between the ropes, which is almost the polar opposite of his obstreperous behavior outside of the ring, will never gain him the unconditional love he so desperately desires. He will discover, as have Mosley, Hopkins, and Trinidad before him, that beating Oscar De La Hoya does not make you Oscar De La Hoya. When Mayweather woke up the morning after the fight, he was still Floyd Mayweather, which might not bring him the celebrated status he aspires to, but is still a good place to be and a perfect platform from which to seek greater glory.

*As the fight progressed, Mayweather's super-quick right hand began to connect with increasing frequency. The blows were not hard enough to put De La Hoya on the floor, but they scored plenty of points and prevented "The Golden Boy" from launching a kamikaze-style attack.*

*Even though he was frequently forced into the ropes by De La Hoya's aggression, Mayweather showed a remarkable ability to block or roll away from Oscar's incoming barrages. These subtle moves were difficult to see from a distance and probably created the impression among the live audience that De La Hoya was accomplishing more than he actually was.*

## WHAT DID THE LOSS MEAN FOR DE LA HOYA'S LEGACY?

While Mayweather is still in search of his ultimate place in boxing history, De La Hoya had already carved out a permanent niche for himself as the most popular and bankable boxer of the post-Tyson era. And nothing that happened the night of May 5, 2007, changed that. Again, De La Hoya proved himself a fierce competitor, a fighter willing to challenge the odds. So what if he fell short? Losing a split decision to the sport's consensus pound-for-pound best is nothing to be ashamed of, especially when you're 34 years old and having only your second fight in almost three years.

Afterward, when De La Hoya said, "I felt I won. I felt I landed the harder and crisper punches," he was making a reasonable case for himself, a case in which he is not the only proponent. But he was wrong when he added, "you've got to beat the champion impressively." All you have to do is beat the champion on two of three scorecards, which is exactly what happened. Still, there was none of the sour grapes that followed his second loss to Mosley, when both De La Hoya and his then-promoter, Bob Arum, hinted at foul play and demanded an investigation. This time, Oscar found the right balance of graciousness and resolve, and came away a better man for it.

It is unlikely that a single fan deserted De La Hoya because of his loss to Mayweather, and he might actually have gained a few with his determined performance and continued willingness to fight the best opposition available. Compared to his kayo defeat at the hands of Hopkins, his most recent significant fight prior to taking on Mayweather, it was a highly respectable performance. In that regard, the fight was something of a catharsis, because a lackluster showing or stoppage loss to the naturally smaller Mayweather would have certainly sullied Oscar's reputation.

But the way it turned out, De La Hoya redeemed himself to a large degree, reinforced the status quo, and positioned himself for future eight-figure paydays should he decide to continue fighting. All things considered, not a bad night's work.

## WILL THERE BE A REMATCH?

It's tempting to say that it's a lock. The ingredients are all there: a record-breaking moneymaker, a reasonably close fight, and the only two boxers on the planet who might be almost as famous as a decade-or-more-over-the-hill Mike Tyson. But the fact that they are even in the running in today's anti-boxing media culture is a minor miracle. And another box-office bonanza, maybe not as big as the first but big enough, is there for the grabbing. But the most obvious rematches don't always happen (think Hagler-Leonard). Both camps have to want it enough to get it done.

Going in, a rematch seemed a long shot. Mayweather was already talking retirement before the fight was signed, and it was unlikely The Golden Boy's ego would survive a loss to Pretty Boy. But when a fight is close, both fighters always think they've won, and this one was close enough to probably convince De La Hoya he could do even better the next time.

Mayweather backed away from his retirement plans another half step every time somebody asked about it. It didn't take long for "I'm still retiring after this fight" to morph into "If the fans demand a rematch, what can I say? I don't know what the future holds for Floyd Mayweather. As of now I'm retired, but I have to talk it over with my team and see what they say."

De La Hoya was also ambiguous in the immediate aftermath, but, like Mayweather, certainly didn't recoil in horror at the thought. "Would I fight him again? Sure, but we would have to sit down and figure that out. Once I go back and sit down and think about it, I

***An overhead camera captures a small portion of the capacity crowd of 16,700 that filled the MGM Grand Garden Arena for the brilliantly promoted fight. Golden Boy Promotions and HBO spared no expense in hyping the fight, and were rewarded by a financial blockbuster.***

will know."

Fair enough. Both fighters deserve some time to rest, mull things over, and count their millions. But they had better not wait too long; this, like virtually all rematches, is best served piping hot, preferably while the embers from the first encounter are still smoldering.

## DID THE FUTURE OF BOXING DEPEND ON THE FIGHT?

The ridiculous proposition that the future of boxing depended on the success or failure of Mayweather-De La Hoya perfectly encapsulates much of the media's misreading of the sport. It is a false impression that flows from a wide and deep pool of ignorance, and was propagated by hacks too lazy to come up with an angle of their own. "The Fight To Save Boxing." *Pleeeze!* As if a single event could kill or cure a sport that is older than the nation in which it took place.

To the contrary, Mayweather-De La Hoya should be seen as proof that under the right circumstances boxing can still capture the American public's attention beyond a cult audience and generate vast amounts of money in the process. In this case, those circumstances included a brilliant publicity campaign by Golden Boy and HBO, highlighted by an 11-city drum-beating tour and the four-part reality show, *24/7*. The program humanized the fighters and their teams (for better or for worse) in much the same manner *The Contender* did a passel of pugs many rungs down the economic ladder. The impact of *24/7* was such that it even made an unlikely celebrity of Floyd Mayweather Sr., who was constantly surrounded by a swarm of curiosity-seeking tourists wielding camera phones and Sharpies. Had it not been for the groundbreaking TV show, few would have noticed the wizened old dude in a sharp suit and dreadlocks.

The sold-out crowd of 16,700 created a live gate of $19-million, and that was just for starters. MGM Mirage Resort Properties, which includes the MGM Grand, Mandalay Bay, Luxor, Monte Carlos, Treasure Island, The Mirage and Circus Circus, sold all 25,000 close-circuit tickets available at the venues so quickly, scalpers were doing a brisk business at four or five times the $50 face value. Fight merchandise was gobbled up almost as quickly as vendors could rip open the cartons and $90 hotel rooms were going for $300 on Saturday night. In Las Vegas, at least, the 133rd running of the Kentucky Derby was little more than something to fill time between the Friday afternoon weigh-in, which attracted a crowd of 7,000, and the fight itself.

Of course, all of the above pales in comparison to the record 2.15 million pay-per-view buys, generating $120-million in revenue. (The previous PPV record was held by Holyfield-Tyson II at 1.9 million buys.) This doesn't mean boxing is back on the front pages to stay. It does, however, signify that despite pessimistic predictions and newly wrought competition from mixed martial arts, boxing is still a viable business that consumers are willing to support if it's marketed properly and delivers a worthwhile product.

This wasn't earthshaking news to people who know and love the sport, but it was still reassuring to the faithful and, hopefully, thought-provoking for those so eager to deliver boxing's postmortem. The Sweet Science isn't dead, never was; it's just gathering momentum for the next so-called "fight to save boxing." There have been hundreds of them already. ■

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PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

# WRIGHT vs. HOPKINS

## 5 Reasons It's Worth Your $49.95

By William Dettloff

Typically, a meeting between two highly skilled, highly respected and mostly popular world-class fighters, one a certain Hall of Famer and the other a very likely one, is cause for celebration among fight fans everywhere. It's the kind of meeting we complain doesn't happen as often as it should, the kind that's usually prevented by egos and insecurities, by rival networks and promoters loath to risk their meal tickets.

Such fights are the rewards of staying loyal to a sport that screws over its fans so frequently you're forced to marvel that there are any left

*Despite all the belts they've won and the money they've earned during their lengthy careers, Wright (left) and Hopkins (right) are still hungry fighters, eager to continue to prove themselves and add to their considerable list of accomplishments.*

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

*Trainer Tommy Brooks' description of Hopkins as a "precision puncher" is demonstrated here, as B-Hop threads the needle and lands a right between Antonio Tarver's gloves en route to winning the light heavyweight championship.*

and thank whatever gene it is remaining in our make-ups that render irresistible the spectacle of two men pummeling one another. Big fights between superbly skilled, seasoned, proven prizefighters are what this business is all about. So why is it no one gives a damn about the Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright light heavyweight world title fight, which is scheduled for July 21?

The consensus answer: It'll be boring. Both guys are excellent fighters but mostly dull ones, and big fights are only fun if the guys in them are exciting as well as good. (The inverse is also true: A good fight doesn't necessarily have to be between two very good fighters; watch any Vinny Pazienza fight for proof.) In fact, one could argue that it's their very competence that makes Hopkins and Wright dull, since one must occasionally get hit in the mouth to be exciting. Both these guys make it their point to not get hit in the mouth.

Bear in mind that no one is saying neither guy can fight; indeed, any fan who chooses not to buy the fight on HBO Pay-Per-View will be well aware that both guys occupy high places on THE RING's pound-for-pound list: Wright is at number five, Hopkins, at 42 years old no less, a mere two rungs lower. It's the combination of them together that many see as potentially sleep-inducing, a slow-motion chess match that will make Sechew Powell's yawning win over Ishe Smith last February look like Dempsey-Firpo.

Well, we're here to tell you, chances are just as good that Hopkins-Wright will be a heck of a good prizefight. Sometimes when a pair of slick guys get together, good things come out of it. And if you want a recent example, look no further than the Steve Forbes-Demetrius Hopkins fight that took place underneath Juan Manuel Marquez' win over Marco Antonio

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

*An aggressive Wright tears into J.C. Candelo during a March 2003 defense of the IBF junior middleweight title. Despite his reputation as a jab-and-move boxer, Wright hasn't really used that style in a number of years, which has resulted in more fan-friendly performances.*

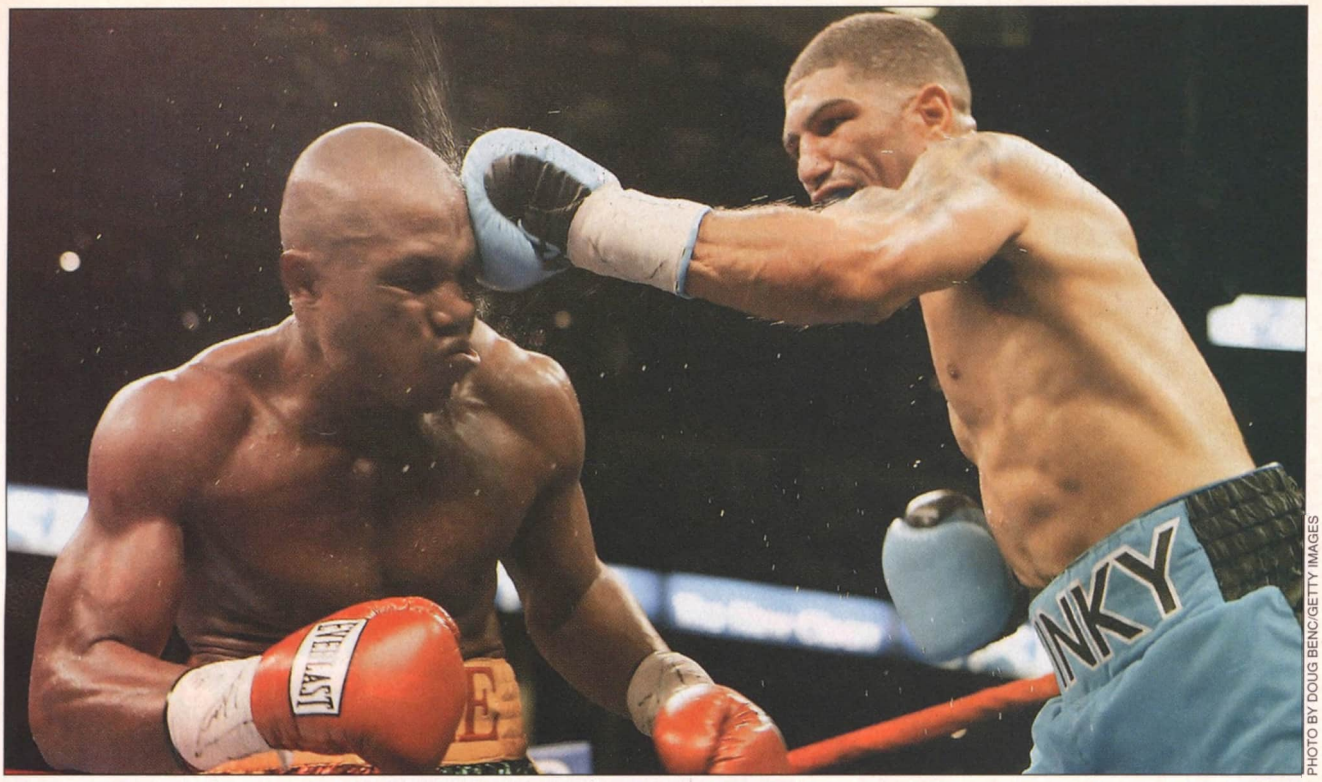



PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

*Southpaw Wright delivers a flush left to the head of Ike Quartey during their December 2006 match in Tampa, Florida. Even though Winky connected with a lot of similar shots, he failed to stop the former WBA welterweight beltholder and had to settle for a points win.*

Barrera in March (which is also a pretty good example, by the way). Hopkins is marginally exciting, and then only in spurts, and Forbes couldn't even be compelling on *The Contender*. They got together and put on a good scrap, even if the decision was an abomination.

Hopkins and Wright can put on a good fight too. And we don't mean a good fight just for the nerdiest boxing geeks, the kind who keep a running count of the number of feints a guy throws or who debate all night over whether a guy is slipping jabs more like Harold Johnson or Jersey Joe Walcott. We mean they can put on a good fight the way we all define good fights. There are at least five good reasons to believe they will, the first of which is that ...

**They're as good on offense as they are on defense.** Hopkins and Wright are so good at making guys miss—or, in Wright's case, at making guys beat the bejesus out of his gloves and elbows—that we forget what good offensive fighters they are. Defense alone doesn't win fights and they've won 98 between them, so someone's getting hit; it's just not them. "These guys are both precision punchers," longtime trainer Tommy Brooks told THE RING. "That's what makes it such an interesting fight. It's really a tossup. They're two slick, cagey fighters, so it's not going to be a knockdown, drag-out fight, but if one of them slips up, someone's going to sleep."

Consider that both of them got enough offense done against a young, strong Jermain Taylor that all three fights ended in very close scores. That was against a guy who threw more punches than they did in each of the fights. Making the opponent miss is only part of the story. Making him pay afterward is the other half, and both of these guys can do that like nobody's business. You don't win as many fights as they have without being able to put on some hurt, which sounds odd when you consider that ...

**Wright is no knockout threat.** Wait—isn't that one of the reasons the fight will be boring—because Wright isn't a puncher? Well, no, that's one of the reasons *most* of his fights are boring. But in this fight it works out better for us. Why? Because it means Hopkins, 47-4-1 (32), won't have to worry so much about defense and about making Wright miss. He has nothing to fear. "If I was in Bernard's corner, I would tell him to go right to Winky," said Brooks. "Try to outgun him and then just to keep gunnin.' See what he's got."

In this fight, Hopkins clearly is the puncher and he's always more compelling when in that mode than when he's in the patient, evil-scientist posture he adopted when he found he couldn't knock out guys anymore just by winging right hands at them. He's a realist and as such is probably sure he's not going to outbox Wright, who is a bit quicker, a southpaw, and has one of the best jabs in the business.

What are Hopkins' advantages? His strength, his size, and his ability (assuming he still has

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

*If opponents don't attack Hopkins, he's perfectly content to outbox them from the outside, the way he did against cautious Howard Eastman in February 2005. Chances are, however, that Wright is not going to allow the 175-pound champion to stay in his comfort zone.*

it) to throw down and get rough when he has to. It also is to his advantage that the fight will be at a catchweight of 170 pounds; he's the bigger guy. Against Taylor, a younger, stronger guy, Hopkins had to be careful not to get caught with anything big and to wear the kid down a bit before opening up. Same thing, for a couple of rounds at least, against Antonio Tarver. There will be no such worries against Wright, and Hopkins knows it. He can go right to work. The flip side of that, which also is good news, is ...

**Wright fights like he's a puncher even though he's not.** Remember when Wright, 51-3-1 (25), was a slick, mobile counterpuncher? Nah, neither do we. It was long, long ago. The only time Wright even remotely resembled that guy in recent times was against Felix Trinidad—and even then he was pretty flat-footed. He didn't take many chances and was content to let his jab do the work, but he didn't use his legs to create room and outbox Trinidad from a distance. He won't move and box against Hopkins either, because it's not the way he fights anymore.

"Wright has been fighting out of character for a while now," said 1980s WBA light heavyweight titleholder Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, now a respected trainer. "He's not a puncher, but he sets himself up like he's one. His defense is his offense." You know Wright's strategy by now: He walks to his man, puts those gloves up around his ears, bangs out right jabs and left crosses, and mixes in counter shots whenever his opponent throws. And it's not just against smaller guys whose punch he doesn't fear, which was the case against Ike Quartey in Wright's last fight. It was the same strategy he used in his own fight with Taylor, the young stud who came into the ring as the puncher. When there was a guy pinned against the ropes in that fight and getting hammered, it wasn't Taylor doing the hammering. It was Wright, the supposed defensive specialist. The reality is ...

**Wright will make Hopkins fight.** Hopkins' most boring fights have been those in which his opponent was intimidated and fearful of throwing a punch. Think Howard Eastman or Keith Holmes. Most guys will be boring when they are in there with a guy who's afraid to let his hands go. That won't be the case with Wright. First, because he's not the kind of guy who's easily intimidated, and second, because he has to move his hands if he's going to win. And he knows it.

"Winky's going to throw a lot of punches," said Mustafa Muhammad. "He'll try to outhustle Bernard. Hopkins is up in age now and Winky is in his prime. He's going to make Bernard work and we don't know if Bernard can match his work rate. Hopkins beat Tarver and that was great, but we all know Tarver wasn't in the shape he should have been because he had to lose weight after the *Rocky* movie. Bernard

has to be in super shape so he can match Winky's punch rate. I don't know if he can."

If it was any other 42-year-old we were talking about, we'd know the answer: There's no way a guy that old can punch enough to match Wright's prodigious punch rate. Quartey couldn't, and he's younger than Hopkins. But Hopkins shares something in common with Wright that suggests to us that the old man will keep his hands moving for as long as he's breathing. It's that ...

**For two guys who have already "made it," they're both still hungry.** You'd think that two guys with established, heady credentials like these two would be getting a little soft by now. Hopkins has absolutely nothing left to prove, having set the record for middleweight title defenses and establishing himself as one of the great 160-pounders. In fact, he's supposed to be enjoying a serene retirement right now, but couldn't stand the quiet. Wright is less accomplished, but with a good reign as a junior middleweight champ and with wins over Trinidad, Quartey, and a pair over Shane Mosley, he's beaten some of the finest fighters of the era. He has little to prove either.

The bank accounts they have (especially Hopkins) would mellow most guys we know, and let's not even talk about their ages; again, Hopkins is 42, and Wright is no baby at 35. They both should be coasting a bit now. But Wright is still so driven, he stormed out of the ring and took a hissy fit after the draw against Taylor. He's got years of frustration built up that he still needs to expel. And Hopkins, as we all know, walks around with a chip on his shoulder that's roughly equal in size to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. He was born with it, he nurtured it in Graterford State Prison, and later used it to club promoters and television suits over the head until they acknowledged his worth. It wears its own silk pajamas to bed these days, but it's still there. Regardless of what these guys have already, there's more to be gotten.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

*Common opponent: Both Wright and Hopkins have tangled with reigning middleweight champion Jermain Taylor. Hopkins lost two close decisions to Taylor, although many observers believed he should have received the nod the first time (below). A lot of folks also thought Wright deserved the decision when he battled to a draw with Taylor in June 2006 (above).*

"It's a very intriguing and very competitive fight," Mustafa Muhammad said. "Winky Wright is not going to run, and we all know Bernard Hopkins doesn't take a step backward from anyone. Bernard's got something Winky wants: the light heavyweight title. He wins that it means more money in his pocket and for his family. He's going to fight hard for it. And Hopkins is going to fight just as hard to keep it."

That's good enough for us. We wouldn't miss this one for the world. ■

## No More Manfredos...Let's Put "Real" Back Into Reality

# BOXING NEEDS CALZAGHE-KESSLER

By Brian Doogan

For the contender from Providence, Rhode Island, it was the most brutal kind of reality. Game but outgunned in just over seven minutes of thoroughly one-sided action, Peter Manfredo was shown by Joe Calzaghe, THE RING super middleweight champion, to be out of his league. Predictably, the 26-year-old challenger clung to a chorus of disapproval at the "premature" stoppage by referee Terry O'Connor, though the point was peripheral. Manfredo's demise was inevitable—a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming truck rarely survives the impact and is never the same—so counting blessings might have been a more reasonable reaction than crying out for a needless count of 10.

PHOTOS BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Super middleweight champion Calzaghe attacks challenger Manfredo (opposite page), who proved to be totally out of depth and provided very little for his purse. Nonetheless, Calzaghe seemed happy with the outcome (left), as did the massive crowd of more than 35,000 in Cardiff, Wales.

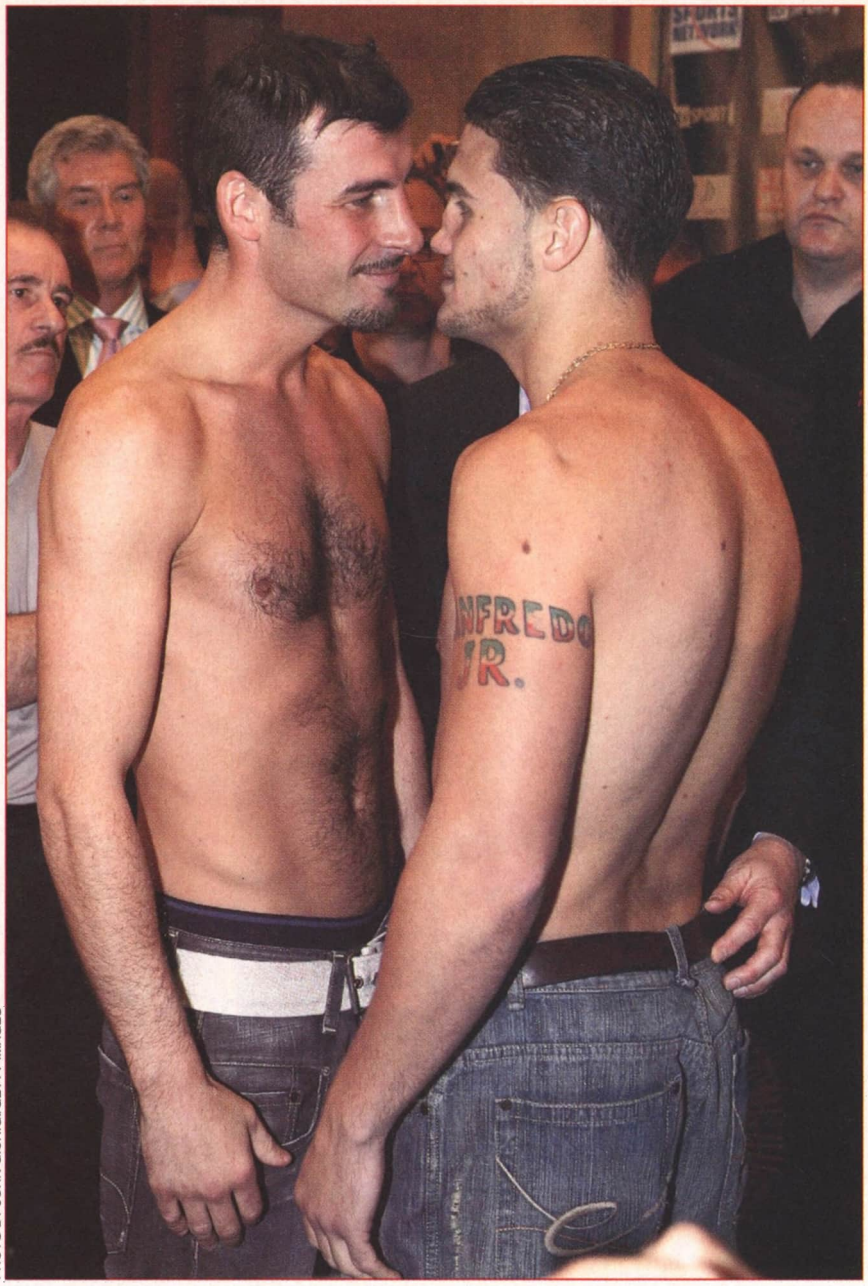


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

*Calzaghe and Manfredo go nose to nose at the weigh-in. Despite all his tough talk, the challenger hardly landed a punch.*

Certainly, there were few among a crowd of 35,018 under the roof at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales, who looked confused about what they had seen—or would have seen had the official allowed the slaughter to continue.

"Of course, it was premature," Manfredo insisted at the postfight press conference. "Did you see my legs buckle? The referee didn't even say, 'Throw some punches back or I'm going to stop it.' It was ridiculous."

Given that the most basic tenet in boxing is that a fighter must fight back, which Manfredo was not doing, there appeared to be little logic in his argument, though many observers embraced the view that referee O'Connor's judgment was wrong. At the time of his intervention, Manfredo had not been wobbled and, as Steve Lillis of the British *Daily Sport* newspaper suggested at ringside, in admonition of the official, "It was a fight for the world super middleweight title, not a six-round contest at York Hall, Bethnal Green." Even Calzaghe sympathized.

"Peter wanted to go down fighting because he trained hard for this fight, but I'm not the referee. I just do my job," said the pride of Wales. "He also said that I didn't punch hard and never hurt him, but if I didn't hurt him, why didn't he hit back? Why take 40 punches without responding, even with one shot? The guy had trained for 12 weeks and it was a world title fight, so maybe he was entitled to get knocked out before the referee stopped it, but it was inevitable that it would have happened, if not in the third round, then certainly by the fourth. Manfredo couldn't hit me, he was slow, and deep down he knows. He can say whatever he wants, but as far as I'm concerned, I sent another fighter packing."

It has been a trademark of Calzaghe's career. Since beating Chris Eubank for the WBO title a decade ago, the 35-year-old champion from Newbridge has faced 20 challenges and outlasted 14 rival titleholders. Contemptuously, some commentators have tried to demean his achievements, while lauding Bernard Hopkins for reaching the same landmark of 20 "title" fights in similar circumstances, but even before his definitive victory over Jeff Lacy won him THE RING belt, Calzaghe was long established as the stand-out exponent in the super middleweight division. A decade of dominance is not to be sneered at, but only meaningful challenges can be acceptable now. As THE RING's number 10-rated contender, Manfredo was a deserving opponent, if no real challenge, but the only opponents now worthy of Calzaghe's talent for conflict are men like Hopkins, Jermain Taylor, and, most pertinently, Mikkel Kessler, the unbeaten Dane. If Hopkins and Taylor fail to take the bait, Calzaghe-Kessler is the only fight that matters at 168 pounds.

"I would love for Joe Calzaghe to come to the United States to fight Jermain Taylor, and maybe it can be done later in the year," said Taylor's trainer, Emanuel Steward, who worked the Calzaghe-Manfredo bout for HBO. "But I also watched Mikkel Kessler a couple of weeks ago when he outpointed Librado Andrade and was very impressed, and that's a fight which needs to be made. Clearly, they are the best two fighters in their weight division—Jermain's still a middleweight, even though he is intending to move up soon—and right now it's a fight the public would love to see."

PHOTOS BY CHRIS YOUNG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

***Referee Terry O'Connor watches as Calzaghe hammers away at Manfredo with impunity (above), and then jumps in and stops the bout midway into the third round (right). Many observers felt that the stoppage was premature, especially those outside of the U.K., but very few thought Manfredo was going to mount a serious challenge.***

Naturally, this being boxing, the match is not certain to be made. Calzaghe, the long-established kingpin, justifiably feels that he is under no obligation to go to Denmark, for Kessler is relatively new on the scene. Yes, he holds the WBC title and the WBA "super" belt and his unbeaten record of 39-0 (29) is married to an impressively fluid and accomplished technique, but as the de facto challenger, it seems reasonable that he should expect to have to fight in the United Kingdom and be prepared to take the short end of any financial deal. Interestingly, beneath the bombast, this view did not appear to be shared by Kessler's promoter, Mogens Palle, in a recent statement that suggested that he and Kessler would accept only "complete parity" or a 50-50 split of all revenue generated by a Calzaghe-Kessler showdown.

"Kessler left Denmark in his first title defense, going to Australia to face their Anthony Mundine in a real fight, not a fantasy, cartoon fight against an actor playing a role as a boxer on a reality TV show," declared Palle. "He is not a stay-at-home [fighter] like Calzaghe. He is a Viking Warrior, and they travel to other lands without compunction."

With his next breath, Palle insisted that if Calzaghe "wants

PHOTO BY CHRIS YOUNG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Calzaghe gives a what-are-you-going-to-do shrug shortly after his bout with Manfredo was called off. Even though he tallied his 43rd consecutive professional victory, surly even the champion would have liked to have done so in a more definitive manner.*

to face Mikkel in his Cardiff backyard, he can pay for this home ring advantage," but if the 28-year-old challenger is really so confident of winning, why would he not be prepared to take less money now and cash in later by reigning into his mid-30s, like Calzaghe?

"The week before Joe's fight with Manfredo—I was confident Joe was going to win—I made a cash offer to Palle for Kessler to fight Joe, which included letting him have the Scandinavian and German TV rights, and these alone must be worth a minimum of $3-million, maybe even $4-million," countered Frank Warren, Calzaghe's promoter. "But I was told that Kessler would not be available to fight in July, which seems strange to me when the first thing he said after beating Andrade was that he wanted Calzaghe. Anyway, Palle came back and said it would have to be 50-50, but that can't happen. When I was trying to negotiate a fight for Joe with Bernard Hopkins, I was prepared to take the shorter end of the purse at 60-40, because at the time that was fair enough. I'm not sure how many defenses Kessler has had, but it's not 20. Joe is unquestionably the number-one fighter in the division, and I've made Palle a very good offer. There's no way that Kessler has ever received $3-million before in his career and there's no other fight which could generate that kind of money for him."

Calzaghe, however, may have an alternative opportunity.

"Joe and I really want to make a fight against Jermain Taylor, and I'm prepared to wait until September to get the fight on," said Warren. "The offer on the table for Taylor is $4-million, but I'll need a response soon because we'll be looking for another opponent in July if neither Kessler nor Taylor come to fruition."

Dennis Inkin, the Russian mandatory challenger for the WBO title, would be a disappointing diversion for Calzaghe who would prefer to have two meaningful title defenses than four more against challengers like Manfredo, who was dominated, destroyed, and utterly outclassed inside three rounds in front of a raucous Cardiff crowd. The attendance set a new European record for a fight held indoors and there was even boxing royalty at ringside in the form of Sugar Ray Leonard, who was an advisor to Manfredo on strategy. But what strategy could Leonard have possibly devised to make any difference? The fight evolved into a monumental mismatch, so overwhelming was Calzaghe's control.

Standing a full three inches taller than his 5'9" opponent, Calzaghe was simply too big and too technically proficient. Manfredo's ring resume had betrayed the kind of shortfall that was apparent from the opening round. In 29 bouts, he had never faced a man of Calzaghe's caliber and his three previous defeats had all come against opponents from *The Contender*, a kind of *American Idol* with gloves, grit, and a hint of *Rocky* all thrown in.

"He did all right fighting in a reality series and made himself famous," Calzaghe had suggested sardonically before the fight. "But let's see how well he does when reality hits him back."

Manfredo, 166, did not do well, even though he appeared cool enough during the introductions. Calzaghe, 167¾, was able to settle into a relaxed rhythm, boxing cleverly behind a stiff right jab, probing for the place to land his hard left. Tentative and unwilling to take the lead, the challenger mostly stood off. Even though he was never going to outbox the champion, he had probably prepared for a more aggressive Calzaghe, the way the Welshman had fought, for example, on the night he annihilated Lacy. Perhaps Calzaghe had taken on board the lesson he learned in his previous bout when a kamikaze approach had caused him to sustain a cut around his left eye and bruising on his cheek in a grueling fight against Sakio Bika.

As it happened, Manfredo was even less prepared for Calzaghe when he opened up. The champion maintained a circumspect approach in the second round, but suddenly in the third he unleashed a series of combinations to which Manfredo had no reply. He leaned out across the ropes in an attempt to evade the punishment being meted out by Calzaghe's fists, but there was no escape. Calzaghe, 43-0 (33), simply kept punching and, although Manfredo was covering up, he did not fire anything in retaliation. He simply froze, as many had suspected he would. *The Contender* was no contender, just a young man in the wrong place at the wrong time, taken apart by a veteran. Concerned that he might be about to take a ferocious beating, the referee intervened at 1:30 of round three, and, although Manfredo and his corner protested, Calzaghe was unloading with impunity and a more grisly demise was on the horizon had O'Connor not taken precipitous action.

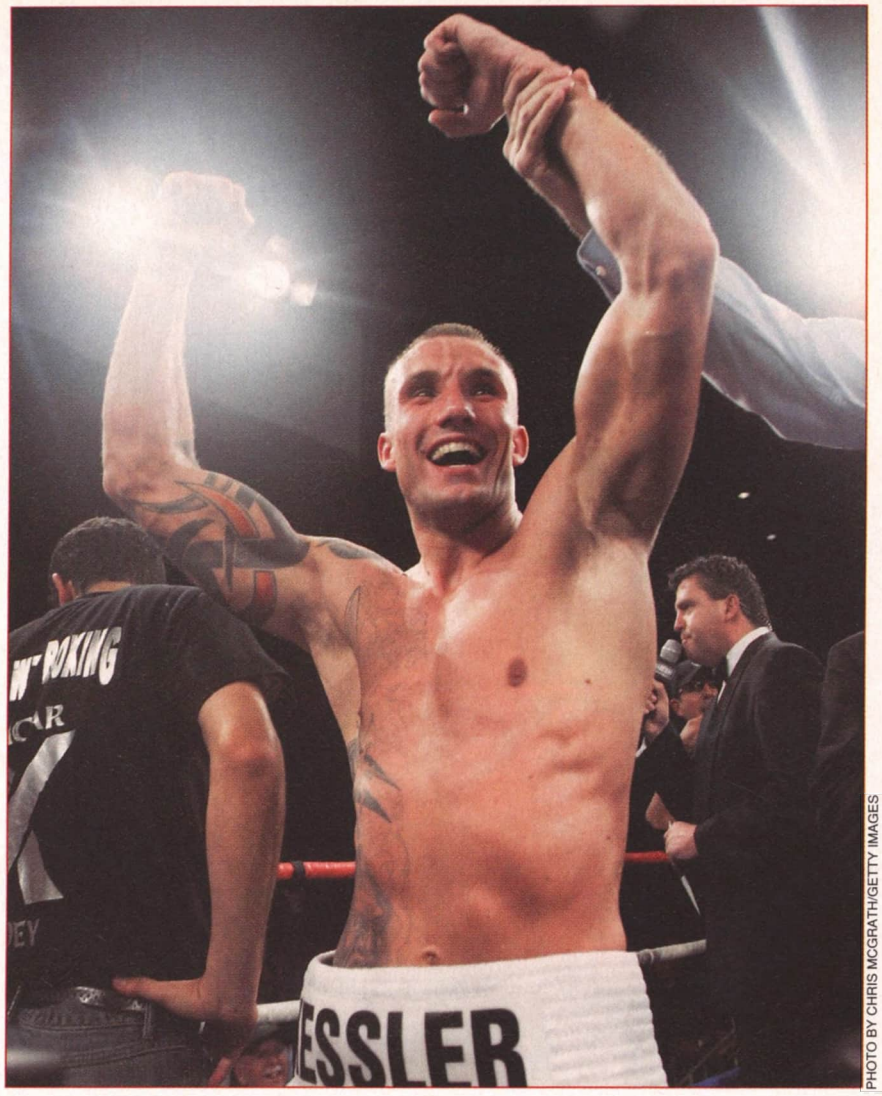
"He took 25 or 30 punches and threw nothing back in reply. My job is to look after the boy and that's what I did," O'Connor said. "If he had been punching back, it would have been different, but he was getting hurt and it was time to take him out."

Calzaghe has shown few signs of deterioration, but Kessler would provide the true test he craves. In his autobiography, *No Ordinary Joe* (published in May 2007 by Century, an imprint of Random House), he gave an insight into what he would like to accomplish over the remainder of his career. Kessler featured prominently in his thoughts.

"I could fight the Danish boxer, Mikkel Kessler, who holds the WBA and WBC super middleweight belts, and a Celt against a Viking might stir some old passions," he said. "Some of my motivation for fighting on is financial, and money can be an unhealthy incentive in this business. Muhammad Ali came back because the money was too good to resist for a fight with Larry Holmes, and despite what he says about his desire to retire as heavyweight champion, Evander Holyfield has got to be fighting on at 44 for money reasons too. I never want to end up like them and I've always remembered a piece of advice that Nigel Benn once gave me: 'Don't fight for the money, fight to win.' You get paid anyway, so it shouldn't be your motivation. But what could possibly be better than where I am at this moment? How do I improve, by fighting Kessler? He's possibly as good a fighter as Lacy was, maybe better, [but he's] largely untested ... There aren't any other super middleweights who get me excited."

Nor could there be a more exciting matchup than Calzaghe-Kessler. That's reality. ■

***Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.***

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***The man virtually all fans and much of the media wants Calzaghe to fight next is undefeated Mikkel Kessler, THE RING's number-one super middleweight contender and the holder of two alphabet belts. But differences between the fighters' promoters could prevent the match from happening in the immediate future.***

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Regardless of whether he's knocking out Jorge Solis (below) or signing autographs for his growing army of fans (right), Pacquiao is rapidly becoming an international superstar.*

# PAC-MAN'S

## The Twists & Turns On The Way To Leno's Couch

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA TOP RANK

# U.S. BLITZ

By Don Stradley

Bob Arum is hoping to turn Top Rank's latest acquisition, Manny Pacquiao, into the sort of superstar who can kick back with Jay Leno on *The Tonight Show* and discuss motorcycles. It sounds farfetched, but maybe it's not.

Pacquiao certainly has the resume of a talk show

# Pinoy Power!

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

*Pacquiao never fails to entertain*

To understand the allure of prizefighters, simply watch Manny Pacquiao. We're not talking about the Sweet Science or Olympic gold; we're talking about men who fight for money. Pacquiao nearly vibrates with the concept of prizefighting. It drips off his gloves. He may have crossed over into the political arena in the Philippines, but at his core, he's a guy who fights for money.

There were some who wondered if fighting Jorge Solis was a no-win situation for Pacquiao. A blowout would be perceived as a mismatch; a struggle could make Pacquiao look bad. But Pacquiao can't be measured by the same stick we measure other fighters with. He's exciting, whether he's fighting Erik Morales or Eric Stoltz. He proved on April 14 at the Alamodome that even when he's a step off his game, he could still beat a good opponent such as the previously undefeated Solis.

Solis, 130, Guadalajara, Mexico, troubled Pacquiao in the early rounds by using just enough movement to keep out of Pacquiao's blasting range. Pacquiao, 128½, General Santos City, Philippines, didn't get going until a head collision in the sixth cut his eyebrow and jarred him awake. Perhaps concerned that his own blood could cause a stoppage of the fight, Pacquiao tore into Solis like a piranha.

He wasn't as crisp as he'd been in the recent past, and it was one of the rare times when Pacquiao didn't seem to love what he was doing, but during the eighth he finally caught up to Solis and bludgeoned him with a three-punch combination that was as quick and clean as anything Joe Louis ever threw. Solis landed on his back and seemed to spin around like an empty Coke bottle. The Mexican rose, but Pacquiao socked him to the canvas a second time. Referee Frank Drakulich (USA) counted Solis out at the 1:16 mark.

Pacquiao's record rose to 44-3-2 (35), while Solis dropped to 32-1-2 (23). After the bout, Solis kidded that Pacquiao didn't hit any harder than his wife, but then added, "I came close, but I just got caught with a punch." Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, admitted Pac-Man was fooling around too much, but said, "He is getting better each time he fights and I don't see anyone that can even touch him."

Promoter Bob Arum suggested Pacquiao's next opponent could be Joan Guzman, a hard man at 130. Guzman should be aware, though, that Pacquiao is no longer fighting solely for money; he's fighting for a constituency.

—D.S.

guest. Not only is he an internationally famous fighter, but he's also recorded a CD of pop songs, has performed with the Black Eyed Peas, and has acted in four Filipino produced action flicks. He was the subject of a full-length 2006 Filipino biopic called *Pacquiao: The Movie*, where he was portrayed by Jericho Rosales, a Filipino rock star who could be described as the John Stamos of Quezon City. Pacquiao has even shown a social conscience, recently running for a congressional seat in the Philippines. His English is improving too, a sure sign that Pacquiao craves success on American ground. His recent win over Jorge Solis at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas, was another exciting knockout victory. But *The Tonight Show*?

"I know what I want to do," Arum told boxingconfidential.com last December after signing Pacquiao. "I want to make him a crossover star. I want him on big shows like Jay Leno."

Other fighters have made appearances on *The Tonight Show*, includ-

ing Oscar De La Hoya, Bernard Hopkins, Christy Martin, George Foreman, and Butterbean. They're all novelty acts: the handsome rake, the ex-con, the tough country girl, the grill salesman, the fat bald guy. Pacquiao, too, could be a novelty: the fighting congressman. "When I'm done, if I do my job right, Manny will be as big as Oscar, maybe even bigger than Oscar," Arum said.

An appearance on a TV talk show is one thing, but Arum's vision of Pacquiao surpassing Oscar is a pipe dream. For one thing, there are approximately 3 million Filipinos in the United States, versus the nearly 25 million Mexican-Americans that Arum targeted to make De La Hoya a star. De La Hoya also had a schoolboy smile that made girls go crazy; Pacquiao's wispy mustache gives him the appearance of a malevolent catfish. Still, Arum worked San Antonio as if it were the first stop on Pacquiao's road to becoming boxing's top draw.

During the days prior to the "Blaze Of Glory" pay-per-view, Arum encouraged public workouts for the fighters. Pacquiao signed autographs, wore a sombrero for his Mexican fans, and impressed reporters with his vastly improved English. Not only does he no longer need a translator, he even thanked the San Antonio mob in *Spanish*. After years of boorish behavior from Floyd Mayweather, Arum must look at Pacquiao like a gift from the heavens, a gift for putting up with Mayweather's garbage.

Details of Pacquiao's Top Rank contract have been kept secret by Arum. Not even his closest aids know what the offer consists of, and reports out of Filipino newspapers are likely exaggerated. Whatever the offer was, it had to be impressive for Pacquiao to wriggle out of a much-hyped contract with Golden Boy Promotions. Pacquiao's decision to go with Arum set off a litany of events that are not only confusing, but also comical. Tales have surfaced of secret meetings involving Oscar De La Hoya, Pacquiao, and a suitcase filled with money; Arum threatened to sue GBP for luring Pacquiao to sign while "under duress"; De La Hoya considered suing Pacquiao for breeching their agreement, made in an L.A. steakhouse last September. Arum even threatened to sue Pacquiao. The dispute between the promotional companies is headed for the courts, but for now Pacquiao has settled on Top Rank. That is, unless someone else offers Manny a bag of cash and a free steak.

Pacquiao is still a hard one to read, even if his English has improved. He gives short answers, is prone to understatement ("I've been busy," was how he described the crush of recent activity), and tends to vanish quickly into his sea of

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***For few rounds, the taller Solis used his superior reach and awkward style to stymie Pacquiao's attack, but as soon as the Filipino's bombs started to connect, the Mexican quickly fell apart. The fight attracted 14,793 fans for a gate of $1.3-million.***

# Mijares Corrals Arce

**Jorge Arce, that wild mustang of a fighter, came into the Alamodome hoping to become the third Mexican fighter after Julio Cesar Chavez and Erik Morales to win titles in three weight classes. Unfortunately, Cristian Mijares, 115, Gomez Palacia, Mexico, a southpaw with a murderous right jab, held the WBC super flyweight title he wanted. Arce, undefeated since 1999, never stood a chance.**

**Arce, 115, Los Mochis, threw roundhouse punches throughout the fight, but as one round melted into the next, he had no answer for Mijares' intelligent style. Arce had one good round, the fifth, when he started mixing bodypunches with headshots and seemed to slow Mijares. By the seventh, Mijares was back in control, wobbling Arce at the bell.**

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Mijares buries his fist in Arce's face*

**The fighters taunted each other all night, with Arce hoping to lure Mijares into an exchange, but Mijares, 31-3-2 (13), wasn't falling into any traps. Mijares didn't escape unscathed—his bruised eyes showed the wear of battle—but Arce was a bloody horror, thanks to a deep gash that opened on the bridge of his nose that leaked heavily from the eighth round on. By the 12th round, as both fighters embraced in a show of sportsmanship, Mijares' trunks, shoes, and back were spattered in Arce's blood; the WBC beltholder looked as if he'd been caught in a storm of red rain.**

**The decision was obvious: Judge Duane Ford saw it for Mijares, 119-109, while judges Mark Green and Tom Kaczmarek also tabbed it for the titlist at 118-111 and 117-111, respectively.**

**Arce, 46-4-2 (35), is a charismatic little slugger with a huge Mexican following. Now, after such a one-sided loss, Top Rank may have to rebuild him to some degree. There's talk of a rematch with Mijares, and despite the pasting Arce absorbed, a rematch would be interesting. Arce, although he comes dressed in the fool's motley, is all heart. If he can solve the puzzle of Mijares' jab, he could avenge the loss and then be back on track to a big money fight with Aussie Vic Darchinyan.**

**Meanwhile, Mijares is a wily, capable fighter who stepped out from anonymity in a big way. Beating Arce was his first official title defense since beating Katsushige Kawashima for the WBC belt in Tokyo in January 2007.**

**—D.S.**

admirers. That's exactly what he did after dispatching Solis. Perhaps, after the bout's stressful buildup, Pacquiao was too spent to play diplomat with American beat writers. And the build up to Blaze of Glory was stressful, even if Pacquiao wouldn't admit it. For instance, not only was the feud between Top Rank and GBP growing, but it wasn't known until the last minute if Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, would be in his corner for the fight.

Roach, ironically, was in Puerto Rico training De La Hoya. Arum has implied that De La Hoya hired Roach as a way to get into Pacquiao's circle, since Roach had preferred GBP's deal to Arum's. But that was just one of the many plot points in this promotional feud.

Arum hoped to rematch Pacquiao with Marco Antonio Barrera in April, but Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer described Pacquiao and Top Rank as "naïve" and wouldn't budge on a March date reserved for Barrera. "[Arum] feels the whole world is going to dance around him because Manny Pacquiao wants to fight in April. It doesn't work like that," said Schaefer. "We had a date in March for Barrera and, frankly, I

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

*Even when he's not at his absolute best, Pacquiao almost always manages to prevail, thanks to his speed, punching power, and tremendous fighting heart. Against Solis, Pac-Man didn't really step on the gas until he was cut by an accidental headbutt.*

didn't want to lose that date."

Arum had the last laugh. Barrera's March date with Juan Manual Marquez wound up being a poorly attended fight that Barrera lost. He would have made a lot more money losing to Pacquiao.

Arum rolled ahead. After envisioning Pacquiao fighting in Steve Wynn's resort in Macau, China, Arum settled on San Antonio, a fitting place since it was where Pacquiao had defeated Barrera in 2003. Of course, there was a little problem regarding the actual airing of the hostilities. HBO had broadcast all of Pacquiao's major bouts since 2003, but opted out of this one. This was unfortunate because HBO has been on a losing streak lately. Perhaps it was their busy April schedule, or more likely, they were trying to remain impartial in the battle between rivals Golden Boy Promotions and Top Rank. Showtime, too, was out of the running since they were locked into their own rigid schedule. Convinced that the million

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

*The familiar smile didn't appear on Pac-Man's face until after Solis had been knocked out. It has been suggested that the additional pressure of running for political office and the court battle over his services has taken some of the fun out of boxing for the Filipino icon.*


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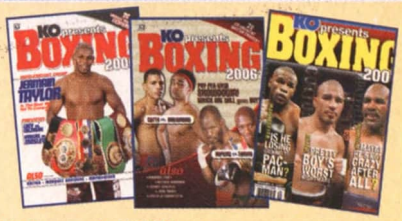

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# More Bang For Your PPV Bucks

The "Blaze Of Glory" pay-per-view had an excellent undercard, beginning with Edgar Sosa, 108, Mexico City, claiming the vacant WBC junior flyweight title via majority decision over the floundering Brian Viloria, 108, Waipahu, Hawaii. It was an action-packed 12-rounder, with Sosa coming on strong during the final four rounds to win. Judge Burt Clement saw the fight even at 114-114, but judges Max Deluca and Jesse Reyes scored it for Sosa, 115-113.

It must have been painful for Top Rank to watch Viloria, 19-2 (12) with 1 no-contest, fail to win in his third straight bout. They've been hoping to turn the feisty little Hawaiian into an attraction, ala Michael Carbajal, but Viloria, who has all of the talent, speed, and power a fighter could want, tends to be outworked by hungry fighters.

Viloria had some success during the early rounds, but by the fifth he seemed unsure of himself. Sosa, 27-5 (14), rocked Viloria more than once during the final few frames and nearly knocked him out in the 12th. Viloria's swollen right eye and bloody nose reflected Sosa's performance. Sosa was scuffed up, too, but was the fresher fighter when the final bell rang.

"I could feel him weakening and I was getting stronger, like a tornado," said Sosa. "My win is bigger than me. I was fighting for all the underdogs in boxing, and the message is: Believe in your dreams and make it happen."

PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDS/GETTY IMAGES

*Sosa socks Viloria en route to upset victory*

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., 151, Culiacan, Mexico, was too much for Anthony Shuler, 150, Indianapolis, Indiana, dropping him twice in the second round with perfectly placed left hooks, before referee Rafael Ramos stopped the bout at 1:32 of the stanza. Shuler, 20-5-1(14), was a sound opponent coming off a pair of knockout wins, but Chavez, 31-0-1 (24), has gone from being a coltish beginner to a legitimate professional fighter. Top Rank may be losing their patience with Viloria, but Chavez Jr., the son of Mexico's most famous fighter, could very well be Arum's next cash cow.

—D.S.

or so buys for Pacquiao's pay-per-view trilogy with Erik Morales would be tapped into for this fight, Arum put the San Antonio PPV spectacle on by himself. It was a gamble, but anyone who purchased the show was treated to one of the best nights of boxing in recent memory.

There were 14,793 customers at the Alamodome for Pacquiao-Solis, not quite the blockbuster Top Rank had hoped for, but far better than recent fights, including Barrera-Marquez, Shane Mosley-Luis Collazo, and Rafael Marquez-Israel Vasquez. Pacquiao is that rare figure in boxing: the foreign star who can sell tickets in America. Ricky Hatton and the Klitschko brothers haven't quite done it. The triumvirate of Roberto Duran, Julio Cesar Chavez, and Felix Trinidad are generally regarded as the most successful non-American fighters to conquer America, and Pacquiao should be mentioned along with them.

If Pacquiao continues following his American fights with bouts overseas, he could surpass what any international fighter has ever done, both financially and historically. And with Arum's dream of worldwide conquest, there's no telling how far Pacquiao can go.

Arum had more on his mind than turning Pacquiao into a crossover star. A longtime critic of how boxing programs are presented on TV, Arum was trying to shake things up. Without HBO or Showtime to dictate the production, Arum and Top Rank President Todd duBoef went all-out with the San Antonio show, using a laser light show and constant music throughout the evening. It was a strategy Arum used effectively last June in New York when Miguel Cotto fought Paulie Malignaggi. The emphasis was on action and fun; commentary blather was kept to a minimum.

"I look at my competition now as not being HBO, not being Showtime, not being Golden Boy or anybody," Arum told maxboxing.com the week

before the fight. "My competition is UFC and MMA, and I'm going to demonstrate that we can do it better than they can."

Purists may not want boxing to become as glitzy as the NBA, and it's an unfortunate comment about America that even a prizefight has to be dressed up like a McDonald's Happy Meal. Still, a little showbiz couldn't hurt. European fight promoters have been having fun with laser shows and dramatic ring walks for more than a decade, which could partially explain why boxing remains popular overseas while it loses ground here in the States. Arum, who has been promoting fights since Muhammad Ali fought George Chuvalo in 1966, is thinking ahead. With Pacquiao as his nuclear missile aimed squarely at the heart of all things pugilistic, Arum is ready to wage war on the competition. Hopefully, Pacquiao's 130-pound body, on the dawn of his 50th professional fight, is up to the task.

Some wonder how Pacquiao will handle the pressure of being a star on two continents. Even though Pacquiao is a national treasure in the Philippines, many think his political interests will hurt his boxing career. Some feel he knows less about politics than he does about signing contracts, and that he's being used as a puppet. Even if Pacquiao's mission to help the poor of South Cotabato is heartfelt, no one believes he'll survive against the corrupt players of Pacific Rim politics.

Still, certain fighters feed off of their celebrity. Muhammad Ali sincerely believed that he was fighting for something bigger than himself, and this belief got Ali through some hard rounds. Pacquiao seems to have this same sense of responsibility. There will be nights in the future when he is being outclassed, but Pacquiao will continue to punch and bleed until the fight is over, all because he believes the happiness and welfare of his people depend on his success. There will be come-from-behind knockouts and more Fight of the Year candidates, all for his countrymen, half of who survive on an income of two dollars per day.

Despite Arum's plans, Pacquiao probably doesn't care if he ever shares a talk show couch with Tony Danza and Britney Spears. In San Antonio, Pacquiao didn't crack a smile until he'd put Solis away and was waving the flag of the Philippines high over his head. ■

***Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.***

PHOTO BY JOEL NITO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

***Following his kayo of Solis, Pacquiao returned to the Philippines for his customary victory parade through the streets of Manila. That's Manny, second from the left, partially hidden by a blizzard of confetti.***

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**Dec. 1985: Michael Spinks: Against All Odds.** Plus: Curry-McCrory preview, McGuigan-Taylor, Alexis Arguello, Michael Olajide, Chavez-Pratchett.

**Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion.** Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

**May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast.** Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

**June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene.** Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

**Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet?** Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

**Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win?** Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

**Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry.** Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

**June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony?** Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Evander Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

**July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die.** Plus: The new Ring ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

**Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future?** Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

**Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys.** Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

**Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn—Million Dollar Baby?** Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

**Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide.** Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

**March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History."** Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

**April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year.** Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

**May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson."** Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

**Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again!** Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

**Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory?** Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

**Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!"** Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

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**March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray?** Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

**May 1989: The Best Of '88.** Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

**Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim.** Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

**March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color).** Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

**April 1990: Pernell Whitaker: Fighter Of The Year (color).** Plus: Tiger Flowers, Duran-Leonard, Chavez-Taylor preview, Jorge Paez, Ali-Cooper.

**May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!"** Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

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**July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot?** Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

**Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There."** Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

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**Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show.** Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

**June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever.** Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

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**May 2000: Lennox Lewis Will Quit ... Or Get Knocked Out, By Michael Grant.** Plus: Roy Jones, Quartey-Vargas preview, Garth Panter, best chins, boxing movies.

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**Feb. 2005 (100-Page Extra): The Incredible Comeback Of Felix Trinidad—Just The Boost Boxing Needs!** Also: Glen Johnson, Klitschko-Williams preview, Kasim Ouma, Tony Lopez, Paul Berlenbach, bodypunching.

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**Spring 2005—Svelter Welter: Moving To 147 Will Tip The Scale In Oscar's Favor.** Also: Vitali Klitschko, Glen Johnson, Andre Ward, Johnny Persol.

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# WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, HENRY & VIRGIL?

## Their 10-Year Gap Creates All Sorts Of Wild Thoughts!

By Eric Raskin

PHOTO BY SANDRA BEHNEBONGARDS/GETTY IMAGES

**Henry Maske and Virgil Hill pose prior to their March 31, 2007, rematch, which came 10 years after their first tussle. The rare occurrence has prompted THE RING to speculate about what would happen if other fighters did likewise.**

*When Henry Maske and Virgil Hill fought at the Olympiahalle in Munich, Germany, on March 31, in the same ring in which they'd traded punches 10 years, 4 months, and 8 days earlier, they taught us three valuable lessons:*

*1) When two fortysomething scientific boxers square off, especially when one is a southpaw and the other is Virgil Hill, don't expect to see a Fight of the Year candidate.*

*2) Going by the paydays these middle-aged pugilists made—$2-million for Maske, $1.6-million for Hill—it's never too late for a rematch.*

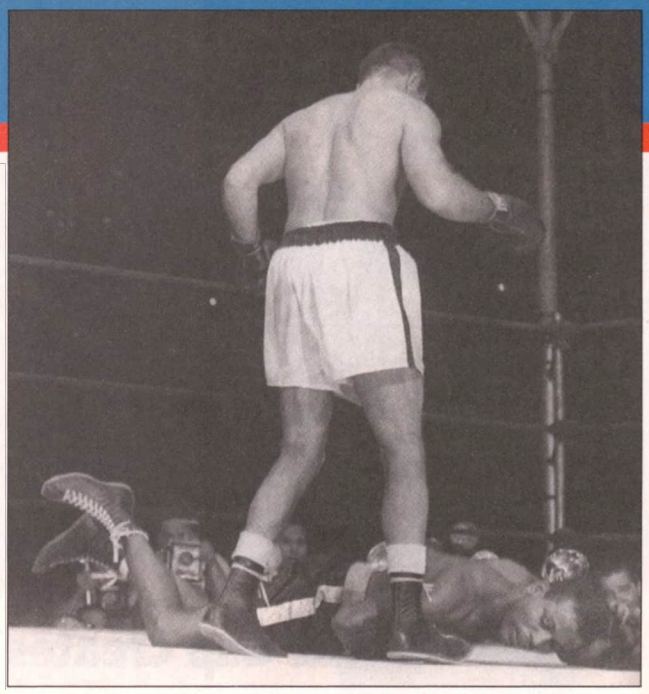
*3) When 10 years pass between bouts, you never know what's going to happen.*

*Though Hill won their first fight by a close decision, then remained active over the next 10 years and twice captured alphabet belts, it was Maske, coming off a full decade of inactivity and facing a fighter who clearly had his number the first time around, who won the rematch, outboxing Hill on his way to a unanimous decision. In boxing's long, storied history of unlikely developments, a 43-year-old ending a 10-year retirement and, in his first official fight back, successfully avenging the only loss on his record ... that has to rank pretty high up there.*

*And it also makes you wonder: If Maske-Hill II, a rematch nobody outside of Maske's die-hard German fans cared about, could happen 10 years after the fact, why couldn't some rematches that fans **really** craved, but never got, have happened? And what might have happened if those rematches had finally taken place a decade after we first started asking for them?*

*In this article, we explore 10 rematches that seemed almost automatic, but never took place for one reason or another, and then we give them the Maske-Hill treatment: We speculate as to what would have happened 10 years down the road. Some that we might have liked to explore, such as Jake LaMotta-Marcel Cerdan or Mickey Walker-Tiger Flowers, got ruled out on account of the fact that one of the fighters died shortly after their first fight, rendering discussion of a 10-years-later return especially moot. But we still had no trouble finding 10 historically significant fights that lacked sequels, and here's what would have happened if the better-late-than-never principle was applied:*

# JOEY MAXIM
## VS.
# SUGAR RAY ROBINSON

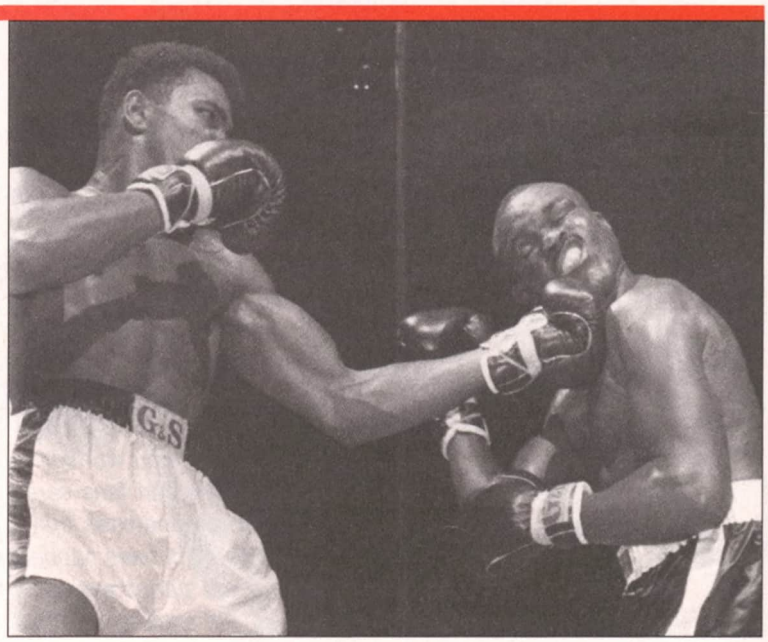


*Exhausted Robinson falls at Maxim's feet*

**In their first fight ...** middleweight champ Robinson was well on his way to outpointing Maxim for the light heavyweight title, but the 104-degree heat at Yankee Stadium did him in, forcing him to retire on his stool after round 13.

**Ten years later ...** would put us in June of 1962, with Robinson 41 years old and Maxim 39. Maxim had been retired for four years, but perhaps there would be enough money in a fight with Robinson to lure him back into the ring, or maybe he could be goaded into trying to prove it was he, and not the heat, that beat Sugar Ray. Robinson was still very much an active fighter, but he was fading fast, his days as a serious title contender having just ended with his unanimous decision loss to Gene Fullmer in March of '61. Still, the greatest fighter ever had enough left in the tank to edge the likes of Denny Moyer and Ralph Dupas, and that would be more than enough to beat Maxim, who not only would be shaking off four years of rust, he'd be looking to snap a six-fight losing streak. Robinson was better for 13 rounds in '52, and he'd be significantly better in '62, winning every round and avenging the loss. Would it mean much? Not really. But since Robinson was making a living purely off his legendary name by that time anyway, why not fight an opponent with a name that meant a little something also?

# MUHAMMAD ALI
## VS.
# DOUG JONES



*Ali twists Jones' face with a left*

**In their first fight ...** rising heavyweight contender Ali was tested for the first time as a pro—and some would say *more than* tested, winning a narrow decision that many felt should have gone Jones' way. The fight was named THE RING'S Fight of the Year, making it somewhat surprising that a return bout never happened, unless Ali's people just didn't like the style matchup and felt it wise to keep their man away from Jones after this narrow escape.

**Ten years later ...** you know what Ali was up to in March of '73, working his way back from his loss to Joe Frazier and splitting a couple of fights with Ken Norton—in other words, right up among the two or three best heavyweights in the world. Jones, meanwhile, had been retired for six years already—but it's not like he was too ancient to possibly make a comeback. He was only 30 when he hung 'em up, so at 36, *maybe* an overdue rematch with Ali could have been sold to the public. And though Jones lost four of his final five, the opposition was strong—Joe Frazier, Ernie Terrell, Boone Kirkman, and Thad Spencer. Perhaps after some time off, he could have felt rejuvenated enough to give Ali some trouble, maybe clip him with a big right hand again. Or perhaps that's a ludicrous thought. Ali was a legend still doing great things, and Jones was a second-tier heavyweight—really a blown-up light heavy—long retired. Ali stops him with ease this time, somewhere inside of five rounds.

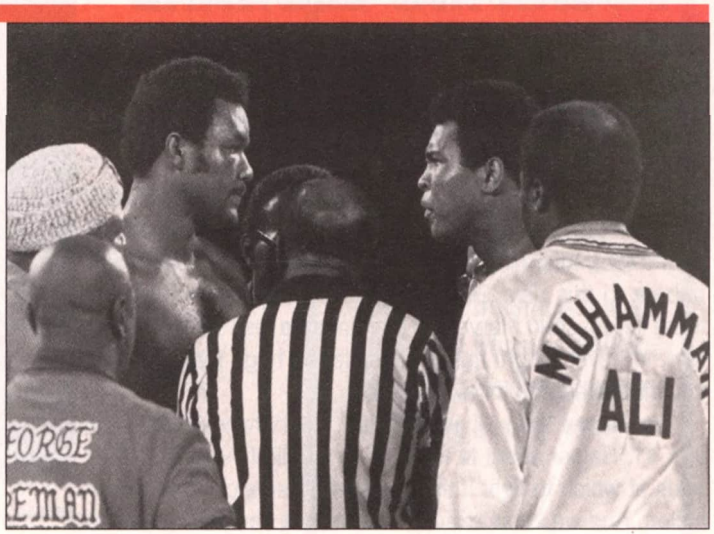
# ROBERTO DURAN
## VS.
# KEN BUCHANAN

*Duran has Buchanan in an uncomfortable position*

**In their first fight ...** Duran began his legendary lightweight title reign by stopping Buchanan, but the infamous ending of the bout clouded the Panamanian's ascension, as "Manos De Piedra's" kayo punch was a vicious low blow that rendered the Scot unable to continue. A rematch seemed only logical, especially as Buchanan went on a 13-fight winning streak, but it never happened.

**Ten years later ...** at the start of 1982, both Buchanan, 36, and Duran, 30, were still active. But they certainly weren't at similar points in their careers. Buchanan fought just once that year, in January, losing his fourth fight in a row and retiring; Duran began '82 with a narrow loss to Wilfred Benitez, and even though a huge upset loss to Kirkland Laing followed, we all know that Duran was still a championship-level fighter. Still, maybe following back-to-back losses, a rematch with Buchanan, which would have looked like a total mismatch a year earlier, could have been justified. Nevertheless, it would have been a mismatch. Buchanan was on his last legs. His four-fight losing streak came against Steve Early, Langdon Tinago, Lance Williams, and George Feeney, and it surely would have hit five against Duran. Buchanan's best shot at beating his fellow Hall of Famer was in 1972, and his chances of winning a rematch diminished significantly with each passing year.

# MUHAMMAD ALI
## VS.
# GEORGE FOREMAN

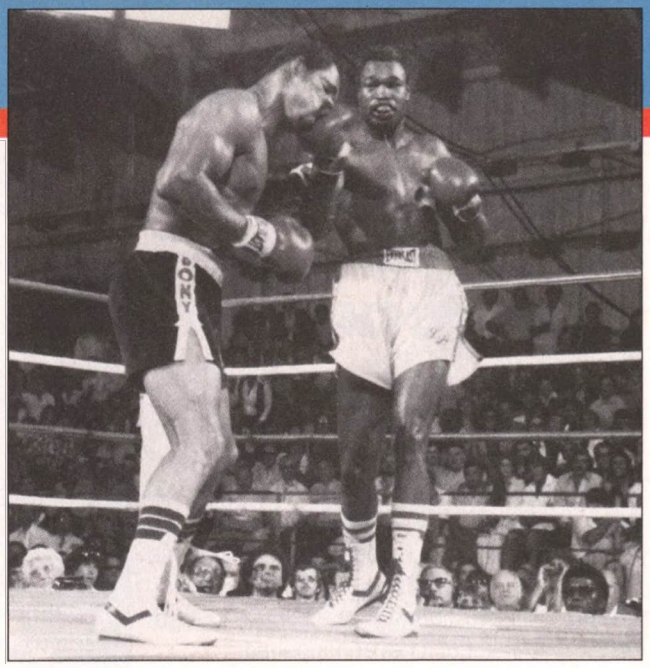



*The staredown before "The Rumble In The Jungle"*

**In their first fight ...** Ali pulled off one of the all-time-great upsets, winning "The Rumble In The Jungle" against the younger, stronger, bigger Foreman by outsmarting him. He used the "Rope-A-Dope" strategy to wear out Foreman and, in the eighth round, knocked him out. A rematch in the next year or two would have been fascinating, but Foreman couldn't quite get himself back on track, and it didn't come together.

**Ten years later ...** no boxing commission—not even some extremely liberal one in the Midwest or on a far-away island—would have sanctioned the fight, because Ali was already showing the effects of Parkinson's by October of '84. So let's be reasonable; let's project about five years later instead of 10. (We may be sadists, but we're not *that* sadistic.) In October '79, Ali was 37 and at the midpoint between his rematch win over Leon Spinks and his loss to Larry Holmes. In other words, he wasn't totally shot, but he was damned close. Foreman, on the other hand, was a mere 30 years old, 2½ years into his initial retirement, and beginning to pack on the pounds. Mentally, he was a shot fighter; physically, he was still capable of great things. And in the first few rounds of a rematch with Ali, Foreman would get over the mental block by discovering that the aged Ali couldn't keep up with him. Big George would box smart, take few risks, conserve his energy, and win an easy decision.

# LARRY HOLMES
## VS.
# KEN NORTON

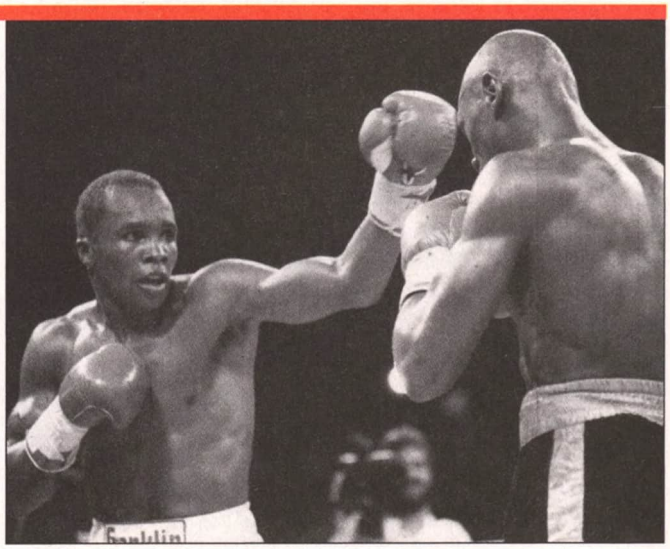


*Norton tastes an uppercut from Holmes*

**In their first fight ...** after a 15th round that ranks as one of the greatest in heavyweight history (and the previous 14 weren't bad either), Holmes won a split decision by a single point to win his first title belt and begin a seven-year reign. An immediate rematch would have been tremendously meaningful, but just nine months later, Norton got iced by Earnie Shavers in a single round, making Holmes-Norton II pointless.

**Ten years later ...** Norton was severely debilitated by a 1986 car accident that nearly took his life, so a June '88 rematch is every bit as tasteless an idea as Ali-Foreman 10 years later. So let's go with the five-year reunion instead. Honestly, we could go with one year later, five years later, or the night before the accident, and it wouldn't make a difference—"The Easton Assassin" destroys Norton in a rematch. Five years later, in June '83, Norton was 39 years old and would be comebacking after two years of retirement, whereas Holmes was the reigning champion of the world, an all-time top-10 heavyweight still pretty close to his prime at age 33. Just like Holmes against Marvis Frazier or Norton against Shavers or Gerry Cooney, this one would be over faster than you could say "Kiss me where the sun don't shine." Norton came as close as you can possibly come without winning on June 9, 1978, but he was basically done as a fighter after that 15th round.

# SUGAR RAY LEONARD
## VS.
# MARVIN HAGLER



*Leonard keeps Hagler at bay with a left*

**In their first fight ...** Leonard returned from a three-year retirement to challenge middleweight champ and arguably pound-for-pound king Hagler. In a decision that people still debate to this day, Leonard got the nod from two of the three judges, and Marvelous Marvin got a loss so frustrating that he never fought again—despite the huge paycheck he could have earned for a rematch.

**Ten years later ...** in April '97, Leonard was about to turn 41, Hagler about to turn 43—not entirely unreasonable ages at which to fight if the Maske-Hill rematch is any indication. And we know exactly how much Leonard had left at the time, since he ended a six-year retirement to get trounced by Hector Camacho in March '97. This is the classic 10-years-later question of whether you're better served preserving yourself through inactivity, or staying somewhat active and adding miles to the odometer. In the case of Maske and Hill, the inactive man had faded less. Nobody knows if the same would be true with Leonard and Hagler. But we do know this: Hagler had spent 10 years seething, and 10 years regretting letting Leonard win the first four rounds. In a rematch, he would start fast, bringing the same sort of fury he brought to the Thomas Hearns fight. And with Leonard's defense not what it once was (see the Camacho fight, the Terry Norris fight, and the second Hearns fight), the guess is that Hagler's heat-seeking attack would get to him. If Leonard couldn't last five rounds with Camacho, then Hagler—even a 42-year-old Hagler—would find a way to take Sugar Ray out.

*Douglas en route to massive upset over Tyson*

# BUSTER DOUGLAS

## vs.

# MIKE TYSON

**In their first fight ...** an upset so historic occurred that if you say "42-to-1 underdog" to any sports fan, they'd know exactly what you're talking about. Douglas shocked Tyson and the world with a knockout to claim the undisputed heavyweight title, but he was kayoed by Evander Holyfield in his first title defense, spoiling any chance of a rematch with Iron Mike.

**Ten years later ...** Tyson, still the biggest draw in heavyweight boxing as he worked his way back from his losses to Holyfield, was hand-picking easy opponents like Orlin Norris, Julius Francis, and Lou Savarese around the start of the new millennium. Frankly, a rematch with Douglas, who fought nine times between '96 and '99, would have been a sellable PPV fight if not for one little hiccup: Buster getting dusted in one round by Savarese in '98. Take away that comeback-killing loss, and Douglas-Tyson II could have done huge business 10 years on. But even so, if Tyson was willing to fight unknowns like Francis, a Douglas rematch wouldn't have been outside the realm of possibility. It would not, however, have been competitive. The key to Douglas' amazing win over Tyson in February 1990 was how spectacularly motivated and focused the challenger was. At age 39, he'd be picking up a paycheck against Tyson, not fighting with anything to prove. Tyson, 33, still had his power and most of his speed, and if Savarese could whip Douglas in one round, Tyson would probably do it inside one minute.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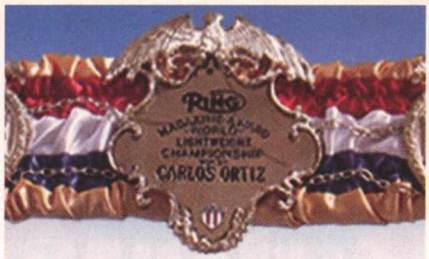


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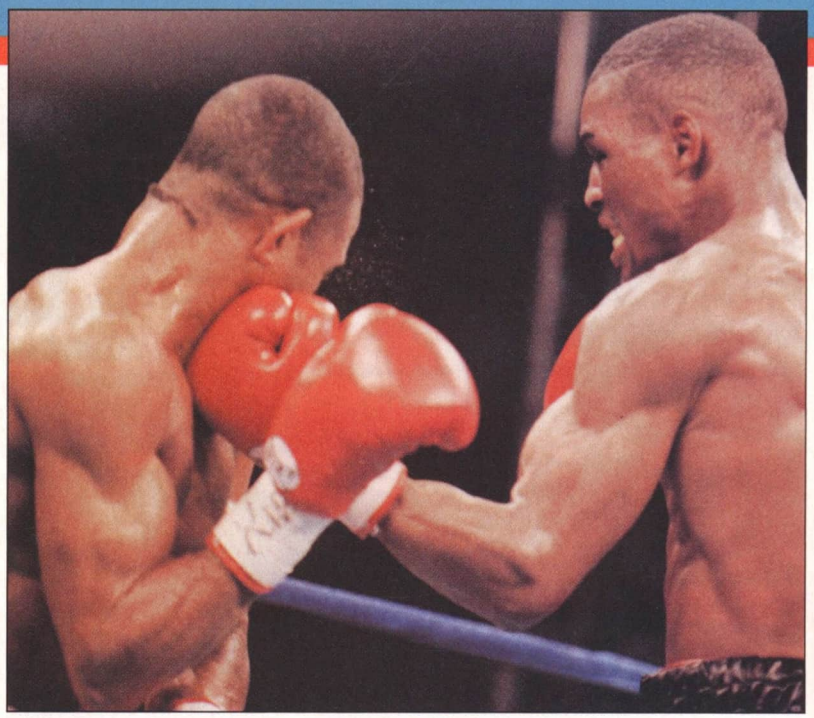


*Hopkins finds Jones with a left*

# ROY JONES vs. BERNARD HOPKINS

**In their first fight ...** both Jones and Hopkins were middleweight prospects on the way up, both engaging in their first alphabet title fight. Neither fought brilliantly—they were both somewhat nervous and tentative—but Jones' speed gave him the edge and he won 116-112 on all three scorecards.

**Ten years later ...** although weight would have been an issue, the rematch would have been hotter than ever in May 2003. It had been discussed several times prior—particularly in 2000 and again in 2002—and in '03, Hopkins was 16 defenses into his historic middleweight reign, while light heavyweight champ Jones had just beaten John Ruiz for a heavyweight strap. On many pound-for-pound lists, Jones and Hopkins were rated number one and number two. This is a fight that made a lot of sense, even if it would have required Jones to drain himself to get back down to 175 (as he would ultimately do with debilitating effects to take on Antonio Tarver) and Hopkins to beef up to 175 (as he would do with rejuvenating effects to face Tarver a few years later). No matter when they fought, Jones' speed would still make it a tall task for "The Executioner." But the Tarver fights are telling. Jones was never the same after going up to heavyweight and shrinking back down, and Hopkins was magnificent when he finally moved up to light heavyweight. Hopkins is a smarter, more adaptable, more technically sound fighter, and the hunch here is that he would have upset Jones by narrow decision.

# FELIX TRINIDAD
## vs.
# OSCAR DE LA HOYA

*De La Hoya scores with a left from mid-range*

**In their first fight ...** De La Hoya had the fight in the bag—just not as far down in the bag as he thought—when he chose to run away from Trinidad for the final 3½ rounds. Even so, the majority of observers felt "The Golden Boy" should have gotten the decision, and though the fight was a disappointing dud, it left enough questions to warrant a rematch.

**Ten years later ...** we have to project into the future, September 2009 to be exact, at which time both future Hall of Famers will be 36. Regardless of what has happened against Floyd Mayweather by the time you read this, it's not unreasonable to assume De La Hoya will still be an active fighter (if you can consider a guy who fights once every year or two "active"). And it's not unreasonable to assume Trinidad will have been inactive four years, since his whitewash loss to Winky Wright. So again we have the question of whether a long layoff helps or hurts. With this matchup, we think it will hurt. Trinidad's great struggles came against guys with extraordinary boxing skills (De La Hoya, Hopkins, Wright), and while he could get away with being less-than-sharp against a ruffian like Ricardo Mayorga, he'd need his timing against Oscar. Is there a chance De La Hoya bends over backward to prove his toughness this time around and lets the Puerto Rican catch him on the chin? Certainly. But it's more likely that Oscar finally gets the decision he thought was his last time.

# LENNOX LEWIS
## vs.
# VITALI KLITSCHKO

*Bloody Klitschko absorbs a left from Lewis*

**In their first fight ...** Late sub Klitschko stunned most experts by standing toe-to-toe with the heavyweight champ and more than holding his own, building a 58-56 lead on all three cards when the fight was stopped at the end of six due to an assortment of nasty cuts around the Ukrainian's eyes. It was an inconclusive ending to a surprisingly good scrap, and a rematch looked unavoidable—until Lewis announced his retirement seven months later.

**Ten years later ...** in June 2013, Klitschko will be 41 and Lewis will be 47 and probably left with only a few scraps on top of his head to braid. Realistically, if this rematch were going to happen, it would have happened by now. Lewis seems entirely serious about being done with fighting, and even if he chose to come back, who's to say Klitschko won't have two artificial knees, an artificial hip, and a maybe even a replacement spine (you can't stop medical science) by then? Still, this article is about making some unrealistic projections, so here goes: Forty-seven-year-olds with so-so chins fighting for the first time in a decade are tough to back. This one comes down almost entirely to age, with Klitschko still being young enough to resemble his former self and Lewis just being too damned old. George Foreman was the exception, not the rule. If they fight in 2013, Vitali kayos Lennox within four or five rounds. And if we're lucky, we'll get to see Lennox and Larry Merchant play microphone tug of war one last time after it's over. ■

# GET HIM WHILE HE'S HOT!

## Duddy Needs To Reclaim His Skills To Make The Moment Last

By Don Stradley

Spending any time at the New York State Athletic Commission headquarters is like wasting an afternoon in the dusty limbo of a high school detention hall.

Irishman in New York: Popular ticket-seller Duddy (right) has fought 10 of his 19 pro fights in New York City, five at Madison Square Garden. In his most recent outing, Duddy sliced up Contender star Anthony Bonsante (below) to win a ninth-round technical decision and stay unbeaten.

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIREIMAGES

*Even though grizzled veteran Yory Boy Campas was well past his prime, he still had enough left to give Duddy a demanding fight and open a nasty cut over the Irishman's right eye when they fought in September 2006. This fight, more than any other, has led critics to question Duddy's defensive skills.*

One sweltering day last August, as a dozen or more fighters stood in line for their prefight physicals, Irish middleweight John Duddy arrived with a stack of paperwork under his arm for commissioner Ron Scott Stevens. Surrounded by Puerto Rican and African-American fighters, the young man from County Derry looked like a tourist who'd wandered innocently into the wrong neighborhood.

Duddy, wearing a cloth newsboy's cap and seeming much smaller in person, grinned when he was complimented on his most recent performance, a convincing stoppage of Freddie Cuevas. With a Derry accent that is absolutely musical, he said, "You mean I've finally started *mooooving* me feckin' head?" Before he could say more, there was a blast from his cell phone, and a half-dozen or so well wishers trying to engage him. Massive support from Irish fight fans has made Duddy popular in New York. The other fighters in the room, club-fighters and raw beginners, had no such problems. If the NYSAC office was a pet store, Duddy was the pup most likely to be chosen, and the other fighters knew it.

But while everyone agrees that Duddy is likable, hardly anyone believes he'll last much longer as an undefeated prospect. The whispers are almost audible: *Get a story on him before he loses; get him on HBO before a real fighter exposes him.* Eddie, Tony, and Martin McLoughlin, the trio of Irish brothers who manage Duddy under the Irish Ropes banner, want him to headline at Madison Square Garden for St. Patrick's Day 2008. Their fantasy opponent is middleweight champion Jermain Taylor. But you wonder if they too are thinking, *Get him in the big room before he loses.*

Duddy leaned on a metal file cabinet and wiped his neck with a handkerchief. The NYSAC office was boiling. Days later, with New York still entombed by high temperatures, Duddy nearly fainted from heat exhaustion on the steps of his Queens apartment. His scheduled bout was canceled.

* * *

A certain type of fighter inspires a cynical reaction. He's usually a young, clean-cut, white guy, often Irish, and through no fault of his own he becomes famous before he's ready. Maybe the cynicism started in the 1950s, when the television networks made a star of a curly haired college boy named Chuck Davey. Things were fine for Davey until Kid Gavilan fought him in front of a national TV audience and tore him to shreds. The same scenario has played out a few hundred times since then: a photogenic kid can sell tickets before he learns how to throw a right hand; he gets pushed into a big-money fight; he gets knocked into oblivion and is never the same. There is rarely any sadness when such a fighter gets destroyed, only the dull satisfaction that comes with saying, I told ya so.

Duddy, though, makes it difficult to be cynical. Late in 2006, he fought Yory Boy Campas, a gnarled Mexican veteran of nearly 100 fights and a former IBF titlist. Duddy withstood some shocking blows and bled horribly from gashes over his eyes, but he defeated Campas on points.

"People have been telling me for a long time that I don't have the face of a fighter," Duddy told boxing writer Thomas Hauser. "I guess now I look like a fighter. Anyone

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIREIMAGES

***Even though he took a lot of punishment, Duddy also landed plenty of his own punches in the Campas fight. After 12 rounds of thrilling give-and-take, Duddy emerged with a unanimous decision victory and a lot of new fans.***

who sees me tonight will think there's a mutant monster walking around the streets of New York."

The fight had been a thriller, but Duddy's trainer, Harry Keitt, wasn't thrilled. Keitt remembered when Duddy was a slick amateur boxer in Ireland. When Duddy came to America in 2003, according to Keitt, "He knocked a few people out and forgot about boxing."

It's true that Duddy, 19-0 (15), isn't a defensive genius. In January 2006, Duddy went to Boston to win every round against an underachiever named Julio Jean. Jean has lost four in a row since then, three by knockout. Still, Jean was able to hit Duddy with his right hand whenever he felt like it. Fortunately for Duddy, Jean didn't feel like it more than once every few rounds.

"Duddy is far from a finished product," said Duddy's publicist, Bob Trieger. "He still gets hit too often, stands straight up going backward, and doesn't throw his jab often enough. The kid's working on those things because everybody knows he won't beat the top middleweights unless he improves in those departments."

After taking time off to let the scars from the Campas fight heal, Duddy's next fight was in March 2007, when he beat Anthony "The Bullet" Bonsante via technical decision in New York. The bout was stopped in the ninth with Bonsante blinded by his own blood.

Then came rumors that Duddy was slated for HBO's *Boxing After Dark* series. According to Trieger, "Main Events has an HBO *B.A.D.* date in September, and they want Duddy to fight Giovanni Lorenzo in New York. Of course they do, because they'll have a sellout with somebody else's ticket-seller, and they think Lorenzo beats Duddy." Trieger thinks the fight could still happen, "but the money has to be right."

HBO could definitely use Duddy. He has a background it could exploit, complete with an uncle killed in Northern Ireland by British paratroopers on Bloody Sunday, January 30, 1972. We can almost hear Jim Lampley now, talking about homemade bombs and the IRA. But Duddy will handle HBO with ease when the time comes. If Duddy hasn't yet learned every nuance of the Sweet Science, he's become a sort of dancing master of the media, granting time to not only the American press, but also to every Irish rag in existence, including overseas newspapers and the numerous Irish-American periodicals that cater to Irish readers stateside. The exposure has given Duddy a poise that can't be learned in a gym.

The payback has been twofold. Not only does every

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIREIMAGES

*Duddy's good looks and pleasing personality have combined with his action-packed fighting style to make him box-office dynamite. Note how much smaller Bonsante's name is compared to Duddy's on the fight poster.*

reporter who meets Duddy come off sounding like a press agent, but being in the center of New York's media swirl has given Duddy a touch of glamour. His fights attract a surprising number of celebrities, including tennis legend John McEnroe, Oscar-winning actor Liam Neeson, and novelist Tom Wolfe. We're not sure about Neeson and McEnroe, but we're pretty sure Wolfe hasn't been to a fight since Cassius Clay fought Doug Jones in 1963. In this era of Russian monsters and Mexican brawlers, an Irish contender may seem as outdated as a rotary telephone, but to paraphrase a line from *Field Of Dreams*: If you give them an Irishman, they will come.

Some feel Duddy is merely using America as a launch pad to get back to Ireland and the U.K., where he'd be a cinch to fill their major venues. It's the blueprint used by another Irish fighter, Stevie Collins, who began his career in America before finishing in the U.K.

"I think it's inevitable that I'm going to go back to Ireland and fight," Duddy told THE RING. "Whether I'm going to be based there or not remains to be seen. Collins had a few cracks at the title here and couldn't do it; then he went home and fought Benn and Eubank in England. So if I can't succeed here, that's always an option for me." The difference is that Collins never had the sort of following that Duddy has already amassed; it may be tempting to stay in New York.

"People told me all about New York before I got here, the big city and all," said Duddy, who lives in Queens' Middle Village with his fiancée. Even so, he was shocked when he arrived. "There were so many Irish people here. I think that I'm lucky to be born in Ireland; I've felt right at home once I got here."

When Duddy fights in the city, the McLoughlins plaster every Irish pub in the area with postcards and flyers, marketing Duddy the old-fashioned way. And even though Duddy would appreciate a few fights out of the limelight just to get some rounds in, he is enjoying the New York experience. "I like the attention, to be

honest with you," he said. "I think it makes me a better fighter."

Irish Ropes is listening to any and all offers. According to Trieger, "HBO and Showtime haven't contacted us about Duddy. If we can make more money in Europe, why not take a less risky fight for more money and expand his popularity there? It's shocking that HBO has signed all of these fighters who've failed, and here's a legitimate fighter, exciting as hell, who is incredibly marketable. The kid is a cash cow and there's no rush to push him into fights he's not ready for. Irish Ropes has turned down offers from promoters all over the world to sell Duddy. They resisted when they weren't making money, and now they're making money. They won't give another promoter a piece of Duddy, so they're hoping one will make them a solid offer without options."

In the meantime, there will be an ESPN date this spring and a possible fight in Ireland. Eddie McLoughlin has already described the opponents as "somewhere between what the network wants and what's wise." The temptation will be to go the Sean O'Grady route and supply Duddy with a diet of stiffs until he can land a shot at Taylor, but Duddy wouldn't mind more opponents like Campas.

"When I watched the Campas fight on tape, I kept pinching myself because I couldn't believe that was me in the ring," said Duddy. "It was like a fight I'd seen years ago, as a kid staying up late to watch it on TV.

"I know I have a lot left to learn, but I feel capable of learning it. I've got a good chin and a good heart. I just want to work hard, work on the defense, work on the jab. I want to start using my boxing brain instead of just using my brawn. I'm learning a bit about myself all the time, as well as about the sport of boxing. I want to tell people, I haven't even had that many rounds, but at the end of the day, it's about putting in the hard work.

"I've had 19 fights and I'm doing okay. My next four or five fights will be crucial to my career. I reckon this is when we're gonna find out if I'm good enough to be with the top pedigree of fighters. I'm looking forward to the challenge and I've got the right people around me. We're on course."

Duddy's critics may be counting the days until he falls. They'll say that other fighters have beaten Campas with much less difficulty, and that if Duddy wasn't Irish, he wouldn't be in such demand. But go to the NYSAC office on any afternoon and you'll find a dozen pugs who would gladly trade places with him. When their blood is spilled in the ring, no Oscar winners are watching. ■

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIREIMAGES

*Duddy poses with former welterweight and middleweight champion Emile Griffith, who spoiled the title dreams of Joey Archer, another popular New York Irishman, by twice outpointing him during the late-1960s in defense of the 160-pound title.*

***Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.***

# GIANT SLAYER!

## Chagaev Climbs The Bean Stalk (And The Rankings) By Chopping Down Valuev

By Brian Doogan

It was three weeks before Nicolay Valuev's mandatory WBA heavyweight title defense, and a group of British boxing writers had been invited to Berlin to speak to "The Russian Giant." Valuev, humorous and open, revealed he would take possession of a German fishing license later in the day and was looking forward to spending time with his son, Grisha, on a lake in the summer. Recently, he and his family had moved into a new house in St. Petersburg after his wife, Galina, gave birth to their second child.

The conversation moved on to what he ate for breakfast (a large bowl of cereal) after a Swiss newspaper reported that he devoured more than two pounds of salmon, and he confirmed a story that he had wrestled and killed a wild boar that had attacked one of his dogs while he was hunting.

"The boar was too close to my dog, so I couldn't risk shooting it. I had to kill it with a knife," he said matter-of-factly. "It's nothing special, it happens all the time."

Valuev's impending challenge against 28-year-old Ruslan Chagaev, a 6'1" former world amateur champion from Uzbekistan nicknamed "The White Tyson," barely merited a mention.

Chagaev, however, was thinking of Valuev. Part of his prefight preparation was "watching tapes

*A joyous Chagaev celebrates winning the WBA strap with a 12-round decision in a battle of undefeated heavyweights. Despite giving away almost a foot in height and more than 90 pounds, the so-called "White Tyson" won convincingly.*

PHOTOS BY SANDRA BEHNE BONGARTS GETTY IMAGES

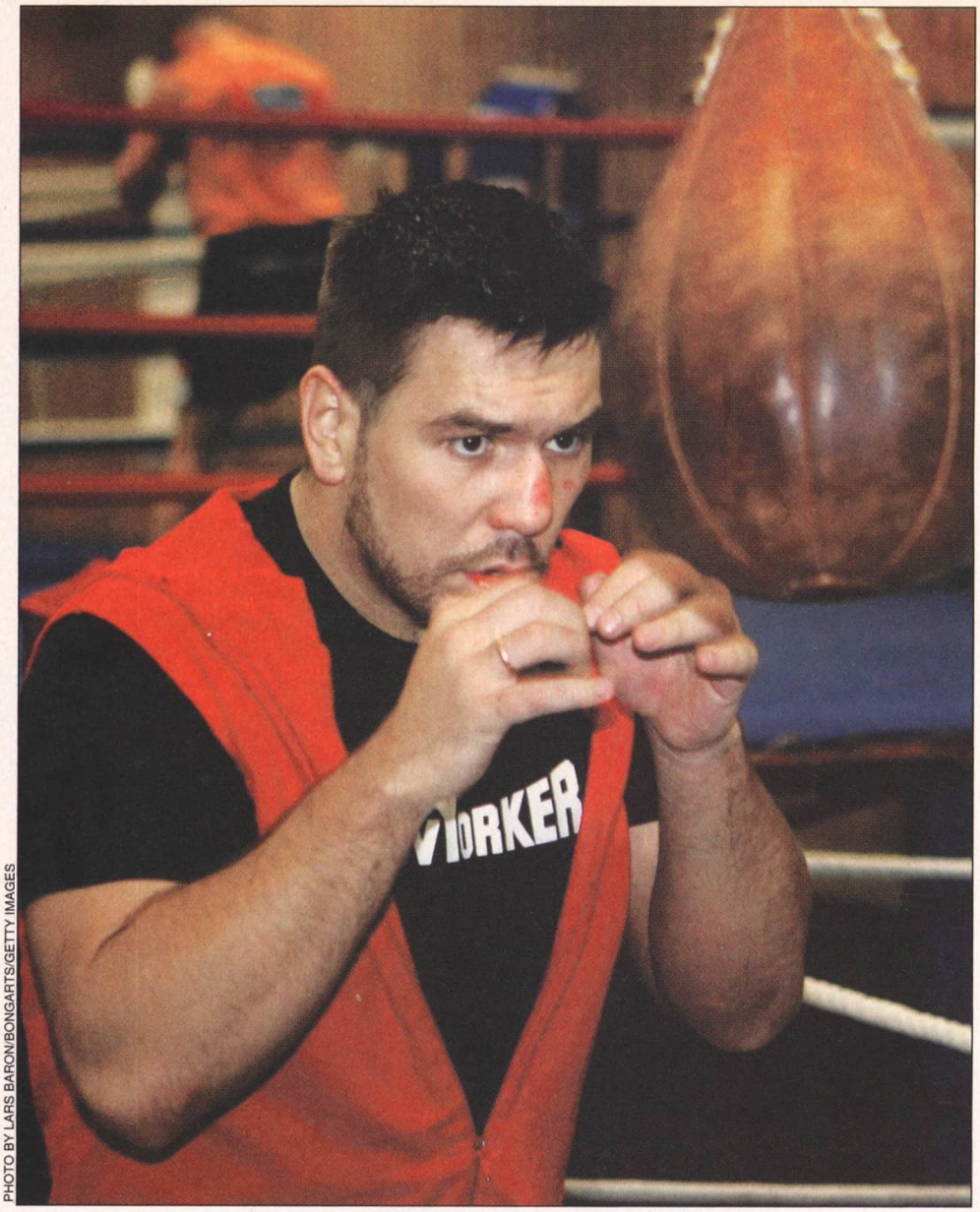


PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

***Besides all the normal things boxers do while training, such as hitting the speedbag, for the Valuev fight, Chagaev worked on tactics specifically designed to overcome his size disadvantage.***

of Valuev on the world's largest plasma TV." More than seven feet wide, the television showed the giant in life size, "so I'll know exactly what to expect when I get in the ring".

Michael Timm, his trainer, insisted that sometimes he would stand on a box while working with his fighter, as it helped him "to get more of a feel for Valuev's size," and every day a group of basketball players, headed by 7' Julius Long, came into his gym and Chagaev was "able to train my neck muscles for the look upwards."

But none of his shtick could disguise the fact that the challenger was training seriously, working carefully on a plan that would negate a size discrepancy of almost one foot and an incredible 91 pounds.

"I am the quicker, more mobile boxer and I have a hard punch. I believe I will win the fight," Chagaev declared from his training camp in Schwerin in northern Germany, near to where he lives with his wife and son in an apartment in Hamburg. "I have almost always faced opponents who are bigger than me and I'm still undefeated. My inspiration is Mike Tyson, who was a small heavyweight but one of the best over the past 20 years."

Chagaev's amateur pedigree was also outstanding. In 1997, he beat the legendary Cuban heavyweight, Felix Savon, to win the gold medal at the world championships in Budapest, Hungary. The final tally of 14-4 left no room for doubt about his superiority over the three-time Olympic champion.

"This match was not that hard," Chagaev declared at the time. "It is a pleasant feeling to beat a living legend, but Savon is not as good as he was three or four years ago. I followed my coach's instructions, which was to get close to him and throw short punches, and I am very happy."

But two 1997 bouts in which he had engaged prior to the amateur championships—knockouts of Donnie Penelton and Brian Jones in Illinois—became the subject of a major controversy when the International Amateur Boxing Association ruled that they were pro contests. Chagaev protested that they were both exhibitions, but the IABA was having none of it, and he was stripped of his gold medal and suspended from amateur competition for two years. The effect was devastating.

"I didn't know what to do at first and it was a difficult time for me, but I soon realized that I would have to remain dedicated, keep training, and be ready to resume my career when the suspension ended," Chagaev recalled. "Boxing was what I wanted to do and I had to be patient and stay focused before I could get back in the ring."

Ironically, he came up against Savon again when his return coincided with the world amateur championships in 1999 in Houston, Texas, but this time he lost to the Cuban in

PHOTO BY SANDRA BEHNE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

*Chagaev used his size as an asset, making himself as small a target as possible. A large part of his success was his ability to make Valuev miss with the majority of his ponderous punches.*

the final. Chagaev's inactivity had hurt him, but the defeat served as a wake-up call, and two years later, with Savon in retirement, he won the gold medal at the World Championships in Belfast and returned as a hero to Uzbekistan, the former Soviet republic that shares borders with Kazakhstan to the north and Turkmenistan and Afghanistan to the south. As an amateur, he finished with an overall record of 82-3, going 2-2 in four contests against Savon.

Although his official pro record includes the disputed bouts against Penelton and Jones, Chagaev had what he considers to be his first professional bout against Everett "Bigfoot" Martin in September 2001, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, when he knocked out the Texan in the fourth round.

Early in his pro career, Chagaev based himself in Las Vegas and got his first real exposure in America when he outpointed Christopher Isaac over eight rounds on Showtime's *ShoBox* series in May 2002. The one blemish on his record occurred five months later when he fought Rob Calloway in Detroit. Referee Ron Cunningham declared the bout a technical draw after halting the action at 2:41 of the third round because of a cut over Calloway's left eye, which had resulted from an unintentional headbutt. Chagaev had dominated from the outset.

By the end of 2003, Chagaev was boxing out of the Universum Boxing Gym in Hamburg, having been signed by Peter Kohl, who saw in him the potential to become one of the world's leading heavyweights. The Klitschko brothers were the stars of the gym then, but their emergence would open the doors for other Eastern European boxers to take control of what was once virtually an exclusively American domain.

"We have become successful in the heavyweight division because we are good workers, disciplined, and can crack down upon ourselves. Above all, we are hungry, and I think this is why we have come through to dominate," Chagaev explained ahead of challenging Valuev. "The most important thing in my life is my family, my wife, my little boy, Artur, and a second son on the way. This is what will motivate me when I get in the ring to challenge for the title. The clear advantage may appear to lie with Valuev, but believe me, I will be much quicker and I will punch hard enough when I get in the ring with the giant. He will not intimidate me, no way."

Chagaev was true to his word on the night of April 14 at the Prosche Arena in Stuttgart when his slick boxing exposed the myth of boxing's giant, "The Eighth Wonder Of The World," as promoter Don King had come to call a man whom others referred to as "King's Kong." While he had made three defenses of the title he claimed against John Ruiz in a disputed call in December 2005, Valuev's vulnerability to movement and a sound strategy had always seemed apparent. Owen Beck, Monte Barrett, and Jameel McCline had all been too intimidated by his sheer size, but Chagaev, well-schooled by Timm, was confident that he had the skills to avoid the Russian's cumbersome punches and do damage with sharp bursts of accurate blows. This is exactly how the fight panned out, with Valuev made to look more ponderous than usual by Chagaev's robustness and

PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

***Although he never dropped or seriously hurt Valuev, Chagaev cracked the Russian giant with some hard shots, such as this flush left to the chin. Down the stretch, the crowd in Stuttgart was chanting Chagaev's name. Conditioning also played a significant role in his victory.***

firm resolve, even though he appeared to be two or three divisions smaller when they came to the center of the ring and, more worryingly, once they squared up.

"I really was not worried by this at all because I was confident that I could take care of myself when the bell rang," Chagaev insisted. "It was Valuev who ought to have been worried by what I could do to him."

In the opening round, Chagaev's master plan was revealed. Slipping Valuev's jab, he countered immediately with a straight left hand to the jaw one minute in and repeated the medicine 20 seconds later. His ability to make the Russian miss with the majority of his right crosses was crucial too, and his assertive start was an ominous sign for the Valuev camp. With Germany's top two promoters in either corner—Valuev having been guided by Wilfried Sauerland for several years—the happier man early on was Kohl.

But Chagaev, 228, did not have it all his own way. Valuev's size made sure that there would be a toll to pay, though his limitations became clear too. Instead of using his left jab as the destructive weapon it ought to be, he was tentative in throwing it, making it easier for the challenger to time the punch and counter with authority. Chagaev's constant lateral movement made it even more difficult for the Russian to pin him down.

"What Ruslan managed to do was shatter the illusion, the myth that had built up around Valuev. It was almost like opponents would just crumble into dust before him, but, mentally, Ruslan was too strong a man for this to happen, and, tactically, he was able to follow his plan to win the fight," said Kohl. "By stepping in with his quick punches and evading the giant's, he showed exactly what Valuev has always lacked. They could box 10 times and the result would always be the same because Ruslan is the better boxer—by far."

Chagaev's only problem was that, because of his sheer size, Valuev, 319, could create an illusion of dominance, as he had against Ruiz, by throwing enough punches to appear to be in control. Just by towering over his opponent and extending that long left hand, the Russian placed a heavy onus on Chagaev to be clever constantly, and it was during the middle rounds that the challenger did his best work and began to pull away on the scorecards. His left-hand counters penetrated Valuev's porous defense repeatedly and he was hit by nothing significant in retaliation.

"The condition of Chagaev surprised me," admitted Sauerland. "I calculated that he would break down around the eighth round, but he fought well all the way, and Nicolay's pressure came too late."

Nor was the giant able to punch his weight, and even when he did

make a concerted effort to break Chagaev down in the final two rounds, the challenger was never in any real danger, and the crowd was chanting his name long before the finish.

"Valuev was strong, without question my strongest opponent up until now," said Chagaev, 23-0-1 (17). "But my punches were more venomous and, if you look at the fight, you will see that I hurt him far more often than he hurt me. He just couldn't put together the punches to bother me."

South African judge Stanley Christodoulou scored what was a close, intriguing fight 114-114, while Chalerm Prayasab had it far too wide at 117-111 in Chagaev's favor. THE RING agreed with Mexico's Hector Hernandez, who score it 115-113 for Chagaev.

On his return to Uzbekistan, Chagaev received from President Islam Karimov the Buyuk Hizmatlari Uchun order for great services to his nation.

"Ruslan Chagaev has made a great contribution to improve the authority and prestige of Uzbekistan in the international arena and in bringing up youth in the spirit and love and devotion to the motherland," Karimov declared.

The party began in the Maritim Hotel after Chagaev took three hours to complete the postfight urine test, with family and friends and even the Uzbek sports minister, Erkinbay Kutibaev, joining in the celebrations that lasted until dawn. They would take their time, Kohl said, before deciding on future plans.

Meanwhile, Valuev, 46-1 (34), cut a forlorn figure and what will ultimately become of the Russian giant, who is to know? It is good that he has developed a life and persona away from boxing, for what became of Primo Carnera, the heavyweight champion to whom he is most frequently compared, is a cautionary tale. Carnera was "a helpless man among wolves," American writer Paul Gallico noted, "who used him until there was nothing more left to use, until the last possible penny had been squeezed from his big carcass." When he returned home late in life to the village of Sequals, where he died alone, Gallico noted how "none of the carrion birds who had picked him clean ever came back to see him or to help him." Valuev should enjoy a happier fate; indeed his career may have reached a salutary juncture before the myth became an overwhelming burden. ■

PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

***A new face in the heavyweight derby: The victory over Valuev boosted Chagaev's profile and elevated him to the number-four position in THE RING ratings. His management team had made no decision about his next bout as of press time.***

***Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.***

# [Summary]

## Heavyweights

Ruslan Chagaev W 12 Nikolay Valuev
(*Wins WBA Title*)
Chris Byrd KO 7 Paul Marinaccio
Sherman Williams KO 1 Wade Lewis
Oleg Platov KO 10 Colin Wilson
Joe Mesi KO 1 Ron Johnson
Elieser Castillo W 10 Lenzie Morgan
Lou Savarese KO 1 Matt Hicks
George Arias KO 5 Gilton Santos
Michael Marrone W 8 Malachy Farrell

## Cruiserweights

Enzo Maccarinelli KO 1 Bobby Gunn
Henry Maske W 12 Virgil Hill
Ryan Henney W 10 James Cermak
Rob Calloway KO 2 Stacy Goodson

## Light Heavyweights

Dries Kumpen W 10 Seladjin Koxha
Nick Cook KO 9 Jeff Baker
Otis Griffin KO 7 Mike Nevitt

## Super Middleweights

Joe Calzaghe KO 3
Peter Manfredo Jr.
(*Retains World Title*)
Ruben Acosta W 12 Francisco Mora
Gustavo Kapusi W 10 Juan Meza
Stas Kashtanov W 10
Mantas Tarvydas
Gusmyl Perdomo W 10 Michal Bilak
Jermain Mackey KO 8 Julius Fogle
Cornelius Bundrage KO 7
Colin McNeil
Elkeno Saunders KO 1
Stephen Johnson
Jerson Ravelo W 8 Paul Buchanan
Robin Reid W 8 Jesse Brinkley

## Middleweights

Howard Eastman W 12 Evans Ashira
Jorge Dominguez W 12
Julio Cesar Vasquez
Arsen Khachatrian W 10
Tetsuya Suzuki
Miguel Espino W 10 Sergey Stepkin
Ben Crampton W 10 Ramillo Caballes
Raymond Joval W 10 Willie Gibbs
Gareth Sutherland W 10
Kris Andrews
Gary Lockett KO 3 Lee Blundell
Anthony Small W 8 Walter Wright
Paul Smith KO 7 Jonathan Reid
Mary Jo Sanders W 10
Valerie Mahfood

## Junior Middleweights

David Estrada KO 4 David Toribio
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 2
Anthony Shuler
Bradley Pryce W 12
Thomas Awinbono
Alfonso Gomez KO 7
Martin Concepcion
Joel Julio KO 7 Thomas Davis
Andrew Lewis W 12 Denny Dalton
Larry Sharpe KO 10 Bryon Mackie
Lukas Konecny KO 7 Serge Vigne
Jamie Moore W 12 Sebastian Lujan
Andrey Tsurkan KO 9
Sammy Sparkman
Clarence Taylor KO 3 David Medina
Juan Marino KO 2 Americo Sagania
Daisuke Hata Tech. Win 7
Pongpetch Chuwatana
Raymond Biggs W 8 Carlos Aballe

## Welterweights

Joshua Clottey W 10 Diego Corrales
Michael Jennings W 12
Mehrdud Takaloo
Vyacheslav Senchenko W 12
Vladimir Khodokovski
Ubald Hernandez W 10
Rogelio Castaneda Jr.
Idiozan Matos W 10 Arnaldo Souza
Vitaliy Demyanenko KO 10
Tia Koswara
Tony Doherty KO 7 Taz Jones
Jorge Miranda KO 5 Hector Saldivia
Freddy Curiel KO 8 Ross Minter

## Junior Welterweights

Kendall Holt W 12 Mike Arnaoutis
Andres Pablo Villafane W 12
Jose Luis Bravo
Emanuel Augustus W 8
Marteze Logan
Mark Jason Melligen KO 7
Christopher Saluday
Vladimir Kravets KO 2
Alexey Volchan
Francisco Figueroa KO 4 Ilido Julio
Timothy Bradley KO 5
Nasser Athumani
Norio Kimura KO 4 Seishu Iida

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

***Cruiserweight Enzo Maccarinelli slams Bobby Gunn***

## Lightweights
Randy Suico W 12
Tomonori Nakagawa
Andrei Kudriavtsev W 12
Andrey Devyataykin
Kengo Nagashima W 10
Ichitaro Ishii
Amir Khan KO 3 Steffy Bull
Shoji Kawase KO 9
Toshihiko Adachi
Yasuhiro Kawabata KO 8
Klachana Jockygym
Brooke Dierdorff W 6 Mia St John

## Junior Lightweights
Manny Pacquiao KO 8 Jorge Solis
Mzonke Fana W 12
Malcolm Klassen
*(Wins IBF Title)*
Jorge Barrios KO 3
Decho Bankluaygym
Francisco Lorenzo W 12
Cristobal Cruz
Roberto Arrieta W 12 Matias Ferreyra

## Featherweights
Oscar Larios W 10 Luis Cid
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo W 12
Jack Asis
Stanislav Merdov W 12
Daniel Kodjo Sassou
Reman Salim W 10 Rico Genon
Cristian Palma W 10 Hardy Paredes
Guty Espadas Jr. W 10 Moises Perez
Vyacheslav Gusev W 10
Andrey Andriadis
Rogers Mtagwa KO 2 Terrence Roy
Naoki Matsuda KO 3 Rodolfo Lopez
Norasingh Kiatprasanchai KO 8
Joe Consulta
Oleg Yefimovych W 8 Xia Yu Qing
Orlando Cruz W 8 Ricardo Medina
Michael Hunter W 8 Ben Odamattey

## Junior Featherweights
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 9 Irene Pacheco
Wethya Sakmuangklaeng W 12
Futa Nakagishi
Bernabe Concepcion W 10
Benjamin Flores
Oscar Andrade W Disq. 6
Jonathan Oquendo

## Bantamweights
Yuki Sakamoto W 10
Petchklongpai Sor Thantip

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

***Middleweight Ray Joval lands a left to Willie Gibbs' body***

Eun Young Kim W 10
Natsuki Fujimoto
Kumarnthong Chuwatana W 10
Hiromasa Ohashi
Rolly Lunas KO 11
Samingnum Voh
Wiwatthanananonth
Sung Kook Kim KO 5
Jung Hoon Kang
Masayuki Mitani KO 2
Shota Terabatake

## Junior Bantamweights
Cristian Mijares W 12 Jorge Arce
*(Wins WBC Title)*
Pramuansak Posuwan KO 2
Daudi Muhunzi
Rayonta Whitfield W 12
Jonathan Perez
Duangpetch Saengmorakot W 12
Adi Wiguna
Abner Mares KO 6
Angel Antonio Priolo
Sergio Santillan KO 6 Cristian Faccio
Kuniyuki Aizawa KO 6 Jin Man Jun
Kahramon Arzykulov KO 1
Sairung Suwanasil

## Flyweights
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 7
Tomonobu Shimizu
*(Retains WBC Title)*
Wandee Singwangcha KO 2 Jang
Peng Gai
Isidro Garcia W 12 Cesar Lopez
Shane Brock D 10 Rommie
Rahayan
Cristian Cardenas Win Disq. 3
Jorge Romero
Dale Robinson D 12 Chris Edwards
Jung Oh Son KO 3 Jung Soo Jung

## Junior Flyweights
Edgar Sosa W 12 Brian Viloria
*(Wins Vacant WBC Title)*
Munetsugu Kayo W 10
Nobuaki Masuda
Daniel Reyes W 12 Nelson Dieppa
Samson Sor Siriporn W 10
Ayaka Miyano
Yuki Sano KO 1
Weerayuth Sithsaithong

## Strawweights
Yutaka Niida W 12
Katsunari Takayama
*(Retains WBA Title)*
Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym KO 8
Pattavikorn Market
Eriberto Gejon W 10
Wisan Sor Suchanya
Donnie Nietes KO 2
Thongthailek Por Vorasing
Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12
Omar Soto

## Jean-Marc Mormeck W 12 O'Neil Bell

***Levallois-Perret, France:*** In their first meeting they had produced one of the most enthralling bouts of 2006 when Bell weathered the early storm and came back to stop Mormeck in the 10th round at Madison Square Garden. Fourteen months later, at the packed Palais des Sports Marcel Cerdan outside Paris, Mormeck was just barely able to maintain his momentum over the duration and reclaim, with a unanimous decision victory, the RING, WBC, and WBA cruiserweight titles.

"I felt the weight of my whole country on my shoulders coming into this fight, but the fantastic support was a big motivation and a big part of my success," said a delighted Mormeck. "I couldn't let down the crowd nor the countless people around the country who were in my corner and, even though it wasn't easy, I knew this time I would win."

With a higher workrate and by landing more power-shots, Mormeck, 198, Point-a-Pitre, France, established his authority, connecting with a series of strong right hands in the opening round that negated the work Bell, 198¼, Atlanta, Georgia, via Jamaica, was accomplishing with his left jab. More hard combinations in the second consolidated his assertive start and, despite being floored by a low blow in the third for which Italian referee Massimo Barrovecchio gave him a minute's respite, he pulverized Bell, 32, for the remainder of the round.

But the defending champ was not about to let his belts slip away easily and he fought back strongly in the fourth and fifth rounds before hurting Mormeck clearly in the sixth, as he catapulted off the ropes to land a series of potent punches to the Frenchman's head and jaw. Mormeck, 34, proved his mettle by not going down and, as they slugged in the seventh, the rematch was meeting the jaw-dropping standard of their first fight. That it did not produce the same result was down to Mormeck's resilience, strength, and cleverness. Because of the nonsensical open-scoring system endorsed by the WBC, a practice that can much more easily distort a fight than enhance it, he was helped also by the announcement in French that he was well ahead on the judges' scorecards going into the ninth round. So Mormeck, 33-3 (22), boxed sensibly for the remainder while Bell toiled fruitlessly for the knockout he needed.

Hubert Minn (USA) and Guido Cavalleri (Italy) scored 115-113 while Mikael Hook (Sweden) saw it 116-112, all for Mormeck. THE RING also scored for Mormeck, 115-113.

"He never hurt me and I thought I won the fight," said Bell, 26-2-1 (24). "I'm disgusted by the decision and I hope he gives me the same chance now to win back my belts that I gave him."

Promoter: **Don King Productions**
Television: **MSG**
(3-17-07)
***Brian Doogan***

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP

*Mormeck twists Bell's head en route to regaining title*

## Joshua Clottey W 10 Diego Corrales

***Springfield, Missouri:*** When testing the waters in a new weight division—especially when skipping over a division to get there—it's not uncommon to begin with a safe opponent. But the safe route has never been Corrales' path of choice, so he jumped directly from lightweight to welterweight (actually, a catchweight two pounds *above* welter) and took on a tough, dangerous top-10 foe in Clottey. As many experts expected, it proved too stiff a test for Corrales. But at least Corrales learned immediately, rather than after a couple of pointless tune-ups, that he can't compete with the elite fighters at this high a weight, and all that remains is for "Chico" to put that information to good use in

deciding his next career move.

Clottey, 149, Bronx, New York, via Accra, Ghana, was too much for Corrales, 149, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Sacramento, California, right from the opening bell. Unofficially, he had a 10-pound weight advantage on Corrales at fight time (a stunning 170 pounds to 160), and that translated into a heavier punch and a sturdier chin. The African also has solid skills and is considerably fresher than the well-worn Corrales. Though both men are 29 years old, there's no comparing the mileage accrued. Together, they gave the enthusiastic crowd at the Shrine Mosque an action-packed show, but it was one-sided in Clottey's favor all the way—sickeningly so at the end.

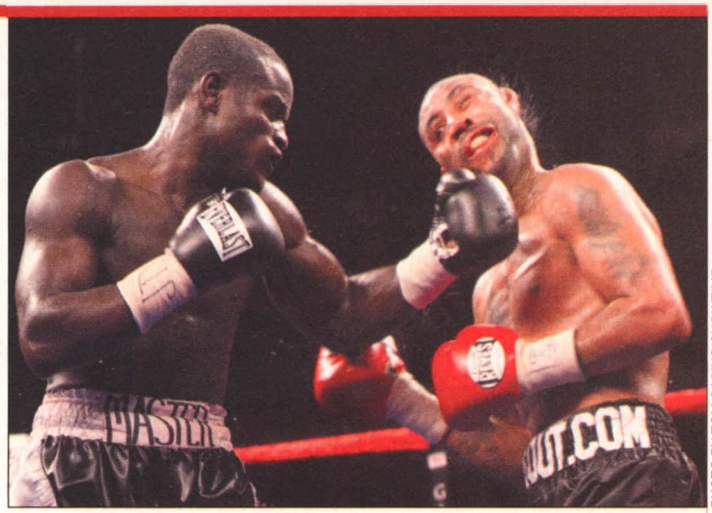


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

*Clottey clobbers Corrales*

A big right hand hurt Corrales late in the first, forcing him to hold on, and when he did eventually go down, referee Mike England (USA) ruled it a slip. A left uppercut stunned Corrales in the second, and by round's end, his nose was bloody. Chico punched back every step of the way, but Clottey absorbed his shots with ease and kept doling out hurtful blows, such as the left to the body in round four that caused Corrales to bend over. The action intensified in the fifth and sixth, moving inside

## [The Ring Fighter of the Month]

# Cristian Mijares

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

In between rounds of Cristian Mijares' career-best win, over Jorge Arce in April, Mijares' cornermen repeatedly encouraged him by referring to his opponent as "slow" and "dumb." Arce, however, is neither slow nor dumb; he is in fact multidimensional and skillful, and is one of the better little fighters of recent years.

He just looked slow and dumb in comparison to the fast and brilliant Mijares.

Mijares was an unknown quantity to many, having fought 33 times in Mexico and twice in Japan but never in the U.S. prior to taking on Arce. Due to his anonymity, he was expected by most fans to serve as little more than an opponent against whom Arce could extend his 7½-year, 26-fight winning streak. But the southpaw had talent and a game plan, using his speed and herky-jerky moves to keep Arce off-balance and ineffective. And in the late rounds, when Arce clearly needed to rally, it was Mijares who did the rallying, bloodying the favored fighter badly and flat-out dominating him in the final round.

Cristian Mijares is anonymous no longer. And you'd have to be pretty dumb and slow on the uptake not to realize what a threat he is to all of the rest of the world's best junior bantamweights.

a la the classic Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo battle, but Clottey continued to do the greater damage.

Late in the eighth, a left hook-left uppercut-right cross combination scored for Clottey, and a right-left-right combo sent Corrales wobbling into the ropes at the bell. A more merciful corner or referee might have waved off the contest between rounds, but the brave Corrales was allowed to fight on—and to take horrific punishment the next two rounds. A huge left hook rocked Corrales early in the ninth, and with 35 seconds to go in the round, he finally went down from a savage left-right-left combination. As he did against Castillo, Corrales spit out his mouthpiece to buy time, and England fell for it, allowing Corrales about 15 extra seconds to recover as the gumshield was washed off. Chico stayed on his feet until the bell, but he took so much punishment over the course of the three minutes, THE RING scored it 10-7 with only one knockdown.

And it got worse for him in round 10. Clottey, 31-2-1 (20), looking like a serious threat to the top fighters in the division, dropped Corrales with a counter right hand with a minute to go, and again the mouthpiece came out, as did blood, spurting from a cut over Corrales' right eye. England chose to take a trivial point from Corrales for the infraction, again buying him an inordinate amount of time when what Corrales, 40-5 (33), really needed was to have the fight stopped.

But instead he heard the final bell and scores of 100-87 (Jerry Griffin), 98-89 (Leo Johnson), and 97-90 (David Sutherland). THE RING had it 100-87.

In his postfight interview, Corrales did not sound good, a bit thick-tongued and mentally unfocused. Though he is reported to have money troubles, many in the boxing community hope that the gutsy warrior is done taking punches. Clottey, meanwhile, has established himself as a player at 147, and could make for thrilling fights against the likes of Miguel Cotto or Kermit Cintron.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Tony Holden Productions**
(4-7-07)

## Mikkel Kessler W 12 Librado Andrade

***Copenhagen, Denmark:*** By boxing beautifully behind a hard left jab and thoroughly dominating Andrade, 168, La Habra, California, via Guanajuato, Mexico, Kessler, 168, Flensburg, Germany, via Copenhagen, Denmark, threw down the gauntlet to Joe Calzaghe, THE RING's super middleweight champion. "I'll be ready for you, Calzaghe," Kessler said, pointing into a TV camera, and adding later, "I want to show that I'm the best fighter." Almost 20,000 people witnessed his annihilation of Andrade at Parken Stadium.

The expectation had been that Andrade, 24-1 (18), would be a tough opponent to overcome, but the reality

PHOTO BY MOGENS FLINDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Kessler was able to hit Andrade virtually at will*

was starkly different. Kessler, who holds the WBA "super" title as well as the WBC belt (this was his fourth alphabet defense overall), had been well-schooled and he knew that his opponent would be susceptible to a boxing lesson. Andrade was tough, but could not have been more obliging in making Kessler look good, for he stood and took most of what Kessler meted out and, bereft of a plan B, had to rely on his courage and incredible capacity to absorb punishment to make it through all 12 rounds. Many at ringside, including HBO analyst Max Kellerman, questioned why his corner did not pull him out. Kessler had his way throughout, but while rightly lauded for his performance, he must know that he will face a more formidable and gifted boxer in Calzaghe, if a deal can be struck between Mogens Palle and Frank Warren, their respective promoters.

From the outset, the pattern was clear: Kessler, 28, controlled with a premium on accuracy and Andrade, also 28, was unable to do much at all to disturb his rhythm. Predictable and even ponderous, his defense proved shockingly porous. Indeed, the longer the fight went on, the higher Kessler's success rate climbed, as he landed more than 40 percent of his blows. Applying pressure appeared to be Andrade's sole purpose, but it was not intelligent pressure, for he merely played into Kessler's hands, almost literally. The challenger did land a left hook on Kessler's chin toward the end of the opening round, but it was an isolated achievement and, by the third round, Kessler was peppering him with hard punches, including a jab-right hand combination that stopped Andrade in his tracks and brought the crowd to its feet.

If there was any cause for criticism, it might be over Kessler's power. While Andrade unquestionably demonstrated a strong chin, Kessler drilled home his hardest shots often enough to have achieved more discernible disorientation. Andrade's balance was awful at times, but he was still able to stay on his feet despite the prolific pounding. Frequently, Andrade's head swiveled ominously on his shoulders, but American referee Laurence Cole was persuaded to allow him to continue because he kept punching back, though the majority of his retaliatory blows fell short or missed the target.

For round after round the action remained similar, with Andrade only occasionally landing a significant punch. He remained dogged, but demoralization had set in long before the finish and the knockout that was required never looked to be coming. At the final bell, only the formality of the judges' decision remained. Tom Miller (USA), Tom Kaczmarek (USA), and John Keane (England) all scored 120-108 for Kessler, as did THE RING.

"Librado was tough and durable and took a great punch, but I showed why I believe I am the best super middleweight fighter in the world," said Kessler, 39-0 (29). "The fight with Calzaghe is what I want and we can do it in September. I will go to Cardiff to make it happen."

Promoter: **Mogens Palle**

(3-24-07)

***Brian Doogan***

## Celestino Caballero W Disq. 9
## Ricardo Castillo

***Hollywood, Florida:*** Two weeks after Rafael Marquez defeated Israel Vazquez to establish himself as The Man in the junior featherweight division, Panamanian southpaw Caballero reminded the boxing world who Marquez' top contender is. Making his first defense of the WBA belt, Caballero pounded fringe contender Castillo until his brother and cornerman, former lightweight champion Jose Luis Castillo, entered the ring to stop the fight, disqualifying the challenger at 2:02 of the ninth round at the Seminole Hard Rock Arena.

The 5'11" Caballero, 122, held a five-inch height advantage over his Mexican foe, so Castillo, 121¾, tried his best to get inside. He had moments of success early, but by the third round, the beltholder's jab was on point. Not only did Caballero win the third round clearly, it became a 10-8 round when referee Telis Assimenios (USA) took a point from Castillo for a low blow.

The 30-year-old Caballero's lead continued to widen, as he moved about the ring as he pleased, landed with jabs and powershots, and kept Castillo, 27, confused by

*Caballero had too much of everything for Castillo*

switching back and forth between southpaw and orthodox stances. The one thing the Panamanian hadn't done through the first eight rounds was visibly hurt his challenger, but midway through the ninth, that changed when a short right hand buckled Castillo's legs. In a desperate attempt to avoid further punishment, Castillo, 27-4 (17), grabbed Caballero, 26-2 (18), around the waist and tackled him. When the action resumed, Castillo turned away from his opponent, suggesting that he was no longer interested in fighting. Brother Jose Luis read the body language well and jumped into the ring, prompting the DQ call from Assimenios.

Television: **Telefutura**
Promoter: **Warriors Boxing**
(3-16-07)

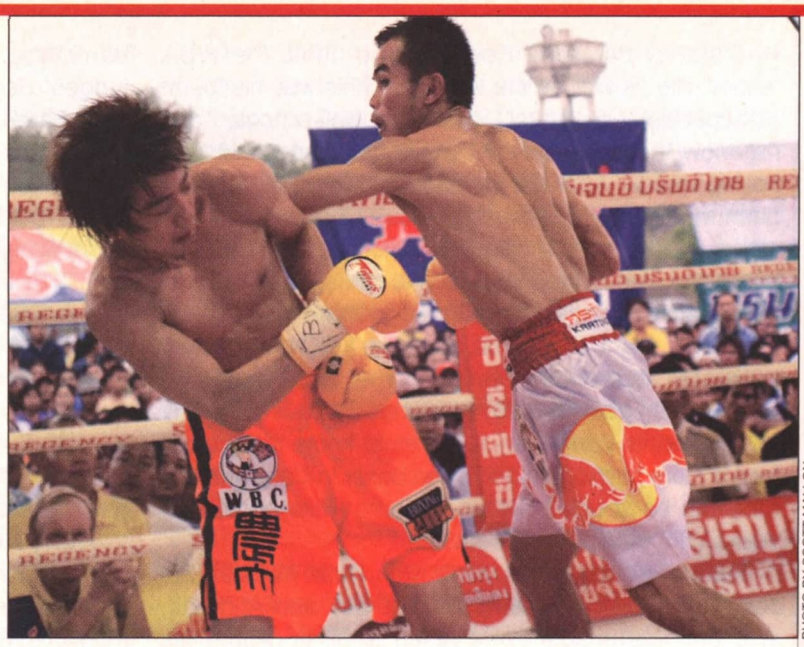


PHOTO BY SCOTT MALLON

*Wonjongkam blasts no-hoper Shimizu*

## Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 7 Tomonobu Shimizu

***Saraburi, Thailand:*** There are fighters who are willing to fight the best, doing so as often as possible, and there are fighters who only fight those they are certain to defeat. Unfortunately, THE RING'S number-one flyweight, Pongsaklek, 65-2 (34), falls into the latter category.

The diminutive Thai scored yet another victory over inferior opposition, as he has for the majority of his career, this time winning by seventh-round TKO over Shimizu, 10-2 (4), of Japan. The southpaw Pongsaklek has gone undefeated since 1996 and the victory marked the 17th consecutive time he's defended his WBC trinket.

Shimizu, 25, magically soared from 39th in the WBC's January ratings to number 14 for his title shot against Pongsaklek. So just what did he do to deserve this whopping 25 spot jump in the ratings that placed him in the top 15, where he needed to be to get approved for a title shot? He won a 10-round decision over Fahpetchnoi Sor Chittpattana, 13-2 (9), the very same fighter whom the now-deceased Filipino journeyman Lito Sisnorio, 10-6-1 (3), destroyed in five rounds.

The Pongsaklek-Shimizu farce (and that's what it was) took place just six days after Sisnorio passed away after being knocked out by former WBC flyweight titlist Chatchai Sasakul—in what most considered an absurd mismatch. Shimizu, like Sisnorio, didn't have much of a chance and was seriously outclassed. From the opening bell, Pongsaklek, 29, advanced without fear, covering up when Shimizu threw punches and letting his hands go when the opportunity presented itself.

In honor of the King of Thailand, the promoter lined one side of the ring with a wall of yellow, gas-filled balloons. One spectator, taking exception to the tribute blocking his view, hurled a lit cigarette and instantly ignited the balloons into a 10-foot-high wave of flames. Fans scurried for cover as the fire shot from left to right in a matter of seconds. The fighters stood motionless in the center of the ring, watching the chaos unfold. In total, 20 bystanders suffered minor injuries and 10 minutes went by before the bout continued.

For the next three rounds, Shimizu, 112, worked his jab but could do nothing to prevent the beltholder from pounding him at will. Pongsaklek, 112, appeared bored and only exerted enough energy to remind Shimizu he was the boss. To his credit, Shimizu continued to fight, occasionally landing, but never hard enough to gain the Thai's respect.

In round five, Pongsaklek turned up the heat, ripping bodyshots and winging overhand rights. Shimizu was brave, perhaps too brave. It was boy against man and obvious to those in attendance the bout would only last as long as the Thai wanted it to.

Pongsaklek spent the next two rounds running after Shimizu. Early in round seven he scored with two short uppercuts on the inside that knocked the wind out of the Japanese fighter and cut the bridge of his nose. One uppercut after another landed, crashing into Shimizu and driving him against the ropes. Pongsaklek lunged in with a straight left and then a huge right that finally put Shimizu down to the canvas. He rose at the count of seven, nose broken and gushing blood. The Thai confidently strode across the ring, looking to punctuate the victory. Shimizu backpedaled, occasionally firing out his jab-straight right, but only the bell saved him.

Between rounds, referee Brad Vocale (Australia) looked in on Shimizu and, upon evaluating his condition, decided to stop the fight.

Pongsaklek has publicly stated he plans to defend his title 20 times before retiring. His next defense is in Japan against Daisuke Naito, a fighter he knocked out in 34 seconds the first time and defeated by seventh-round technical decision in the rematch. There is bad blood between the two and Pongsaklek wants to shut Naito's mouth. "He talks a lot, too much. I've already beaten him twice but he still thinks he's a better fighter than me. I want to knock him out and shut him up."

Assuming he gets past Naito, Pongsaklek's 19th defense would be another rematch—against Tobonomu Shimizu. That's what we call playing it safe.

Promoter: **Petchyindee Promotions**
(4-6-07)
***Scott Mallon***

## Demetrius Hopkins W 12 Stevie Forbes

***Las Vegas, Nevada:*** The televised undercard of Juan Manuel Marquez vs. Marco Antonio Barrera at Mandalay Bay featured two back-to-back scoring atrocities, both the kind of judging fiascos that drive boxing fans to other visual entertainments. When the unanimous and lopsided scores were announced after the Hopkins-Forbes bout, mass puzzlement swept the arena. Most of the media and fans had it for *Contender* TV alumnus Forbes, by close scores. But the judges scored it for the nephew of Golden Boy Promotions partner Bernard Hopkins—by wide scores. The scores the judges came up with seemed almost impossible to arrive at given the action in the ring.

Just looking at their records, it was clear that Hopkins, 26-0-1 (10), and Forbes, 32-5 (9), weren't kayo artists, but the Nevada commission made a stoppage even less likely with its relatively new stipulation that junior welters wear 10-ounce gloves. That was changed from eight ounces, which remains the standard among other commissions. Neither man was ever rattled or in serious trouble.

No one could accuse either fighter of laying back. It was a competitive bout from first bell to last, with exchanges generally brief but featuring lots of counterpunching. The first round was not a feeling-out round. Both Forbes, 140, Portland, Oregon, and Hopkins, 140, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, were well-schooled and tried to establish themselves early, and they stepped up the action even more in the very next round.

Forbes, 30, seemed a little more aggressive and a little more accurate, and he mixed up his combinations better and did the great majority of the bodypunching. Hopkins, 26, appeared to tire in round eight, but came out strong in the ninth and probably won the round.

The fighters touched up before the 12th round using both gloves, a sign of mutual respect in a bout that didn't require much work from referee Kenny Bayless (USA).

Judges Robert Hoyle (USA) and Glenn Trowbridge (USA) both saw it 118-110, and Dalby Shirley (USA) had it 117-111, all for Hopkins. THE RING scored it 115-114 Forbes. This fight didn't hurt the reputation of either fighter, and may even have helped the loser more because he succeeded in proving himself as not just another reality show fighter. But Hopkins and Forbes compete in a division that includes damaging hitters such as Ricky Hatton and Jose Luis Castillo, and if they don't have a lot of pop in their punches by now, they probably won't ever get it.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-17-07)
***Ivan Goldman***

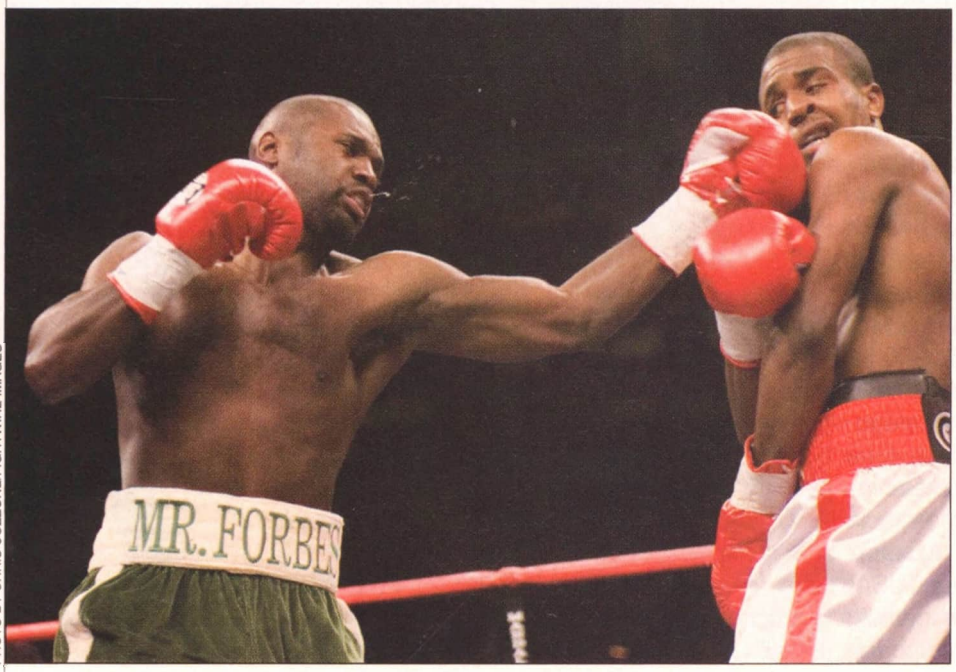



PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Forbes deserved better from the judges in Hopkins bout***

## Daniel Ponce De Leon W 12 Gerry Penalosa

***Las Vegas, Nevada:*** Feared kayo artist De Leon came out sizzling against fellow southpaw and former 115-pound titlist Penalosa, but when De Leon, 26, finally realized he couldn't put down his veteran opponent, he looked a bit lost and tired. His punches lost their snap, though he never stopped throwing lots and lots of them—enough to convince the judges he won a one-sided fight at the Mandalay Bay Events Center, even if the fight was anything but one-sided.

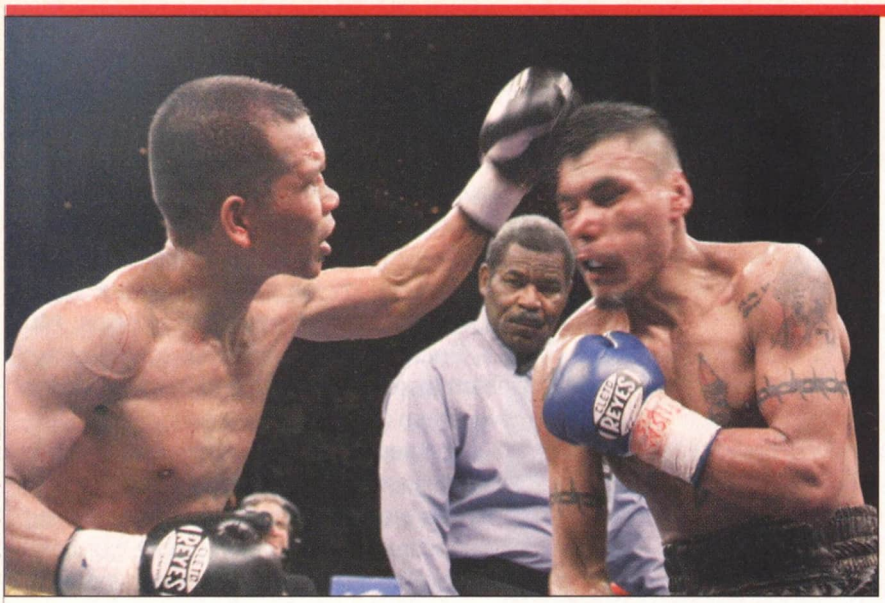


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

*Penalosa distorts Ponce De Leon's face with a left*

Technically polished Filipino Penalosa, 122, was much speedier and employed the kind of footwork his Mexican opponent could only dream about. At 34, he showed the quickness and timing of a man 10 years younger, making De Leon, 122, look clumsy by comparison.

The fight had an ebb and flow to it and lots of suspense, at least in the early rounds, when it wasn't clear Penalosa would succeed in getting his man out into deep water. De Leon came out blasting in the first round, throwing to the head and body, and looking to do serious damage with every shot. But in round two he got caught with a big right hook that should have won the round for Penalosa (and actually did on one of the mysteriously lopsided scorecards).

By round four, De Leon was sometimes backing up, but he scored well to the body and it was still anybody's fight. By round seven of this high-action contest, De Leon's right eye was closing.

According to CompuBox, De Leon, 31-1 (28), threw 1,399 punches, which was the third highest total ever measured for a junior feather. But with 259 landing, his connect rate tallied at a low 19 percent. Penalosa, 51-6-2 (34), was 175 for 481, for a 36 percent connect rate.

After hearing what could be categorized as goofy scores in the previous bout between Steve Forbes and Demetrius Hopkins, the crowd and the media were shocked again. Nelson Vazquez (Puerto Rico) and Chuck Giampa (USA) had it 119-109 and Dave Moretti (USA) scored it 120-108. The media scoring was mostly close, and went both ways. THE RING had it 115-113 Penalosa.

The referee was Robert Byrd (USA).

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-17-07)
***Ivan Goldman***

## Takefumi Sakata KO 3 Lorenzo Parra

***Tokyo, Japan:*** Having failed twice before to defeat Parra for the WBA flyweight belt, plus also having suffered a split decision loss to Roberto Vasquez for the "interim" title, Japanese challenger Sakata, 112, finally acquired the belt as he halted a badly overweight Parra, 116¾, Venezuela, at 0:14 of the third round at Korakuen Hall. Parra had forfeited the belt when he couldn't make the 112-pound limit the previous day, but he still had his unbeaten record to fight for. Nevertheless, the ex-titlist abruptly quit, complaining of pain in the right shoulder muscle when he failed to answer the bell to start the third round. Referee Guillermo Perez Pineda (Panama) confirmed Parra's decision not to go on, and then waved his hands to call Sakata the victor.

Parra, 28, got off to a better start than the nervous Sakata, 27, outjabbing and outpunching the Japanese

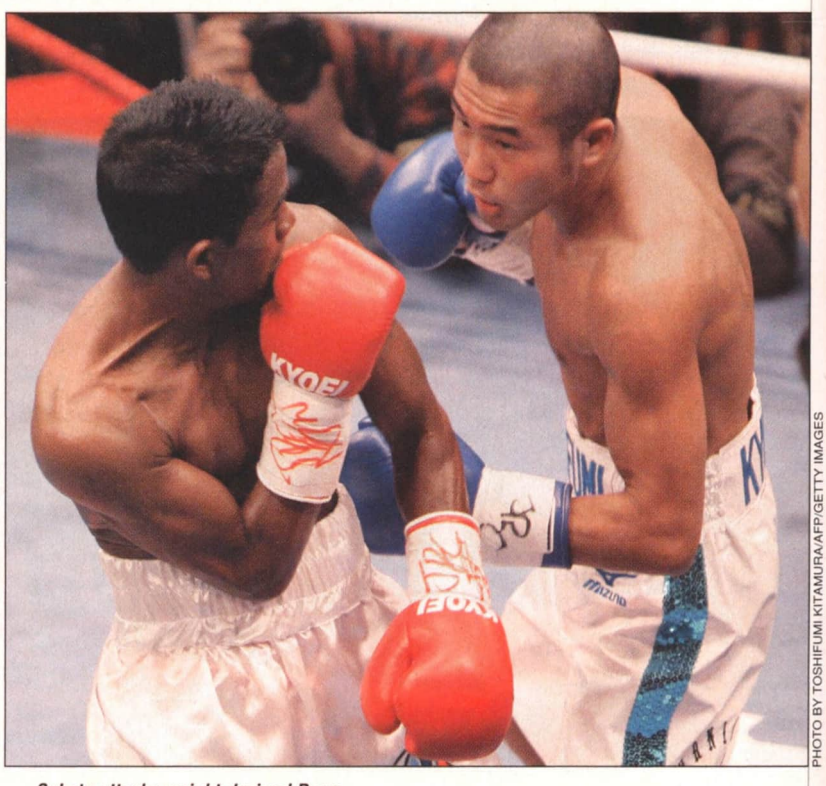


PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Sakata attacks weight-drained Parra*

challenger in the first round. But Sakata took control in the second. He became aggressive and exclusively aimed at the breadbasket of the Venezuelan, who kept backpedaling and absorbed much punishment. Parra quickly slowed down and began to take overhand rights to the face.

After the second, Parra indicated his shoulder pain to his cornerman, Orangel Ramos, and said to him that he would not be able to fight on. The stock of Parra, 27-1 (16), dropped drastically, due to both his surrender and his extreme failure to make weight. It was a disappointment to the fans that Sakata was in tip-top shape while Parra wasn't in good condition. It is very rare that the modest Japanese crowd greets a foreign boxer with severe booing, but Parra did receive such verbal attacks from the spectators.

PHOTO BY ERIC ESTRADE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Narvaez barrels into Asloum*

"I dedicate this victory to the late Mr. Masaki Kanehira, the founder of Kyoei Gym," said Sakata, 30-4-1 (15). "I'm very happy to fulfill my dream."

Promoter: **Keiichiro Kanehira's Kyoei Promotions**

(3-19-07)

***Joe Koizumi***

## Omar Narvaez W 12 Brahim Asloum

***Cannes, France:*** Nearing five years of holding the WBO flyweight title, Narvaez made his 10th successful defense of the belt, and it was probably his most meaningful to date, coming against 2000 Olympic gold medalist Asloum on the 28-year-old Frenchman's home turf at La Palestre. Though Narvaez didn't beat Asloum quite as one-sidedly as Lorenzo Parra did 16 months earlier, it still was convincing performance, netting him a unanimous decision.

Southpaw Narvaez, 112, Cordoba, Argentina, is more boxer than puncher, but he got off to a puncher's start, dropping Asloum, 111¼, Bourgoin Jaillieu, France, in the first round with an overhand left behind the head. It could arguably have been called a slip because the punch didn't land in a legal scoring area, but referee Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico) gave Asloum an eight-count, putting him in an early hole.

And with Narvaez, 31, picking his spots well and frustrating Asloum by turning defensive and forcing him to lead, it was a hole that the challenger couldn't dig his way out of. Asloum fought well in spurts, but could never sustain any effective offense. The crowd supported Asloum throughout, filling the arena with chants of "Brahim!" but he was hopelessly behind entering the 12th round. Asloum, 21-2 (8), tried for the knockout while Narvaez, 24-0-2 (15), mostly clowned and moved away, a strategy that wasn't popular with the crowd, but that was smart as far as preserving the victory. Judge Rocky Young (USA) had 118-109, Victor Salomon (Mexico) scored it 117-110, and Noel Monnet (France) saw it 116-111, all for the Argentine.

Promoter: **AMI Promotion**

(3-10-07)

## Yutaka Niida W 12 Katsunari Takayama

***Tokyo, Japan:*** WBA minimumweight titlist Niida, 105, Yokohama, Japan, kept his belt by getting off the canvas in the first round, connecting with effective uppercuts, and eking out a hairline decision over WBA "interim" ruler Takayama, 104¾, Osaka, Japan, over 12 hard-fought rounds at Korakuen Hall. It will surely be a strong candidate for Fight of the Year in Japan.

On the official scorecards, Russell Mora (USA) had it 114-113 for Niida, Medardo Villalobos (Panama) 115-113 for Niida, and Michael Lee (Korea) 115-114 for Takayama. The referee was Takeshi Shimakawa (Japan).

Takayama, 23, jumped out to a good start and when he connected with a countering left hook in the opening session, Niida went down—half from losing his balance and half from taking the shot. The ref ruled it a knockdown and gave him a count despite the beltholder's disapproval. When the fight resumed, Takayama landed a sharp left-right combination to the still bewildered Niida, 28.

In rounds two, three, and four, Takayama threw faster combinations while Niida occasionally scored with stronger single shots. A clash of heads in the third left Niida with a lump on his forehead.

In the fifth, the tide turned in favor of Niida, who was making the fifth defense of his second title reign. He began to land trademark left uppercuts to the chin of the busy footworker, and used that punch, doubling it and tripling it, to control the next four rounds.

Takayama may have shaded the ninth round, as he displayed busier hit-and-run tactics and attempted to

frustrate Niida with soft combos. Niida's left cheek was swollen, but he kept going forward behind solid jabs.

Heading into the 12th, it became a one-round fight, seemingly tipping in either direction depending upon who won the final round. And it was Niida, 21-1-3 (8), who got the better of it, landing the effective shots while Takayama, 18-3 (7), landed only lighter blows.

It was truly an excellent fight, and so close that either could have won, though Niida's more effective aggressiveness was favored by two of the officials on this night. Certainly, Takayama appears to deserve a rematch.

Promoters: **Teiken Promotions, Yokohama Hikari Promotions**

(4-7-07)

***Joe Koizumi***

## Wladimir Sidorenko D 12 Ricardo Cordoba

***Stuttgart, Germany:*** When these two fought a year before, almost to the day, the judges contrived a controversial drawn verdict that necessitated a rematch, but, incredibly, it ended the same way again. Sidorenko, 118, Hamburg, Germany, via Energodar, Ukraine, was the aggressor throughout, but Cordoba, 117¼, San Miguelito, Panama, frequently made him pay for coming forward with hard southpaw right hooks and jabs, and the crowd at the Hanns-Martin-Schleyer Halle was entertained from first bell to last with Sidorenko holding on to the WBA bantamweight title that he was defending for the fourth time.

The Ukrainian had followed up his previous bout against Cordoba with a points win last July over Thailand's Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym, the only man to have beaten the Panamanian. Cordoba, 29-1-2 (19), had fought twice back in Panama and was determined to make it third time lucky in a title challenge by returning from Germany with the belt.

"I have come to Europe to gain the title and to take with me what belongs to me," Cordoba declared. "The first fight gave me some valuable experience and now I am better prepared because I know what to expect."

Sidorenko, 19-0-2 (6), promised to send him home again empty-handed. "My title does not belong to him, despite what he may think, and I will prove that in the fight," he predicted.

The newspapers in Panama had been unequivocal in their condemnation of the drawn result first time around, with one suggesting that Cordoba "was the victim of a worldwide hold-up." This time it was close all the way. In the opening round, Cordoba connected with a right that knocked Sidorenko off-balance and followed up with a straight right through the Ukrainian's guard that caught him on the chin. Demonstrating not only his ability to take a punch, but also his fierce willpower, Sidorenko immediately fought back, and in the second, he caught the Panamanian challenger with hard lefts and rights as he drove him across the ring. Whatever he lacked in punching power he made up for with effective aggression and a clear determination not to allow Cordoba to dictate terms, despite his four-inch superiority in height.

Sidorenko, 30, was relentless in coming forward, but, as he came in, this often left him vulnerable to the Panamanian's lead right. Nonetheless, he constantly applied pressure and came through strong right hands all night, determining that he had to take the chance to step inside or Cordoba, 24, would simply have controlled the action on the end of his long jab.

Frequently, the challenger found himself with his back to the ropes, but he was winning some of the rounds regardless. In the final round, Sidorenko finished strongly, pushing Cordoba around the ring and driving in short right hands to the head while firing hard to the body. Both fighters' cornermen lifted them on their shoulders at the end of the bout, and two of the judges were unable to separate them on their scorecards, Lynne Carter (USA) and Ted Gimza (USA) both scoring 114-114, while Glenn Feldman (USA) appeared to be off-base with a score of 117-111 for Sidorenko. THE RING scored 115-113 for Sidorenko. The referee was Mark Nelson (USA).

While a third bout between the pair would be logical, Cordoba has stated he plans to campaign in the 122-pound division.

Promoter: **Universum-Box**

(3-17-07)

***Brian Doogan***

PHOTO BY SANDRA BEHNE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

*Sidorenko and Cordoba battle to another draw*

## Anthony Mundine KO 9 Sam Soliman

***Sydney, Australia:*** Before the fight, Mundine had predicted that he would beat Soliman like no man ever

has. The 31-year-old was true to his word, being the first to stop Soliman inside the distance and recording the most brutal and dominant display of his career.

It was a rematch to a September 2001 fight in which Mundine prevailed on a split decision to the boos of the crowd. This time around it was all one-way traffic for an impressive Mundine, who claimed the vacant WBA super middleweight belt (the result of Mikkel Kessler being elevated to "super champion").

After both Aussies set a fast pace in round one, Mundine 167¼, Sydney, set the tone for the night toward the end of round two, dropping Soliman 166¼, Melbourne, to the canvas with a sizzling right hand. Soliman regained his feet but was on wobbly legs, and Mundine landed four clean right hands to end the round.

The 33-year-old Soliman had previously established himself as a middleweight world title contender with his close 12-round points loss to pound-for-pounder Winky Wright on December 10, 2005. While he courageously tried to work his way back into the fight and even had small flurries of success in rounds three through eight, Mundine was in control throughout and ended the action once and for all in round nine.

A series of right hands from Mundine landed early, rocking Soliman's foundations. Two quick right crosses scored, and Soliman was down on the canvas again. He gallantly tried to fight on, but was quickly down again from another clean right hand. On unsteady legs, he dragged himself up and was allowed to continue. Two more vicious right hands and down went Soliman, 33-9 (13), for the final time, crashing violently into the ropes. Referee Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) waved off the contest at the 2:26 mark in round nine.

"I knocked his ass out," declared Mundine 28-3 (22). "I'm allowed to be cocky because if he had knocked my ass out, he would have been cocky, so that is the name of the game, man."

Promoter: **Tony Mundine**

(3-7-07)

***Paul Upham***

## Jhonny Gonzalez KO 9 Irene Pacheco

***Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona:*** Having taken a shot at junior featherweight glory and come up short, Gonzalez returned to his natural division and defended his bantamweight belt for the second time, demonstrating patient power throughout a slow but steady victory over tricky veteran Pacheco at Desert Diamond Casino.

Colombian Pacheco heard his share of cheers from a packed house, but for Mexico City's Gonzalez, who stopped Ratanachai Sor Vorapin in the same arena in 2005 to gain alphabet laurels, it was like a homecoming crowd.

The assembled crowd on the desert outskirts of Tucson was polite for a couple of minutes during a very tentative opening frame. Then derisive, often humorous Spanish whistles began. But most true boxing fans have forgiving hearts, so when the fighters finally started throwing to end the second session, the jacked-up audience erupted.

Gonzalez, 117½, looked thin compared to the southpaw Pacheco, 118, but as Gonzalez' looping thumps echoed throughout the room, it was clear he carried the power. Pacheco fired back after every Gonzalez hook and kept most of the action close, but gave up insurmountable ground on the scorecards. Gonzalez increased his foot movement and got busy with an effective jab by round three.

A left to the temple wobbled Pacheco, 36, in the fourth and put him into a defensive posture for the rest of the fight. Gonzalez, 25, used his reach advantage behind right hands and forced Pacheco around the ring in survival mode.

It wasn't the most crowd-pleasing action, but Gonzalez did build a steady lead and Pacheco began to run out of breath in the middle rounds. Pacheco tried to make a stand in the sixth, and had probably his most effective moment, but it would ultimately make no difference.

Gonzalez did some great bodywork in the ninth. Follow-ups to the head put a dazed Pacheco away when Gonzalez, 34-5 (29), drove him through the ropes with a trio of rights. Pacheco hung on in deep distress as referee Bobby Ferrara (USA) waved it over. The official time was 1:04.

"I didn't want to take any chances because I know Pacheco is very skilled," said the calm and cool winner. "I knew from the beginning I'd get to him, I just wanted to be sure I didn't make any mistakes."

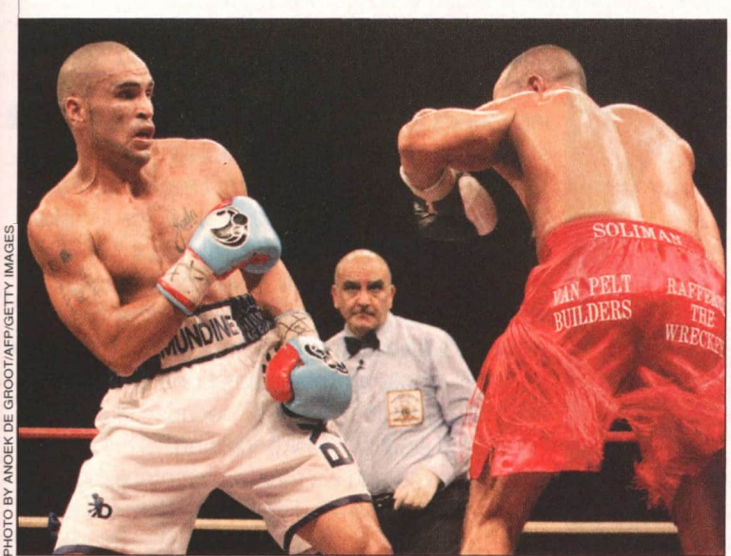



PHOTO BY ANOEK DE GROOT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

***Mundine still "The Man" after stopping Soliman***

The dignified, well-traveled Pacheco, 33-2 (24), indicated he'd reached the end of his fistic journey.

"I don't have any excuses," reflected the Colombian, who formerly held a flyweight title. "The bodyshots hurt me. He doesn't look as flashy, but he's quicker and stronger than Vic Darchinyan (Pacheco's other defeat). I'm going to take what money I made from boxing and go home to study business administration."

Retirement is a familiar chorus after such bruising disappointment, but in the classy Pacheco's case, it seemed to ring more true than usual.

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
Television: **Telefutura**
(3-30-07)
***Phil Woolever***

## Henry Maske W 12 Virgil Hill

***Munich, Germany:*** Inspired by Hill's capture of the vacant WBA cruiserweight belt in January 2006, Maske, 189½, Frankfurt, Germany, set himself the task of avenging his only defeat in 31 bouts. His problem was that a whole decade had gone by since Hill, 190, Williston, North Dakota, inflicted this reverse. Only 26 percent of the polled German public, which had stayed loyal to him throughout his career, gave Maske a chance, but he was able, at 43 years old, to get himself back into shape and, surprisingly, he retained sufficient poise to box his way carefully to a unanimous decision victory at the Olympiahalle, where he had met his downfall a decade earlier.

On that night more than 10 years before, Maske had tearfully announced his retirement from the ring. He went into business and successfully ran four McDonald's restaurants, but the pain from that sole loss remained. "It's a decision not everyone understands, but what's important is that I understand it," the former IBF light heavyweight titleholder said when announcing his comeback. "I hope that I can go back to where I stopped 10 years ago. I will fight to win, although the last time my effort was not sufficient. It is clear that I want to revise this."

But Dariusz Michalczewski, who beat Hill immediately following the first Maske fight, summed up the widespread skepticism. "Maske will lose early," he insisted. "The condition will not be there, the psyche will not be there, and the expectations are too great. Henry can't have better reflexes than he had almost 11 years ago. For me, it's very courageous what Maske is doing because you could play tennis, swim, kick the ball a little, but boxing is the only sport in which you can't do more after such a long break. When he gets hit in the nose, Maske will wake up in the ring."

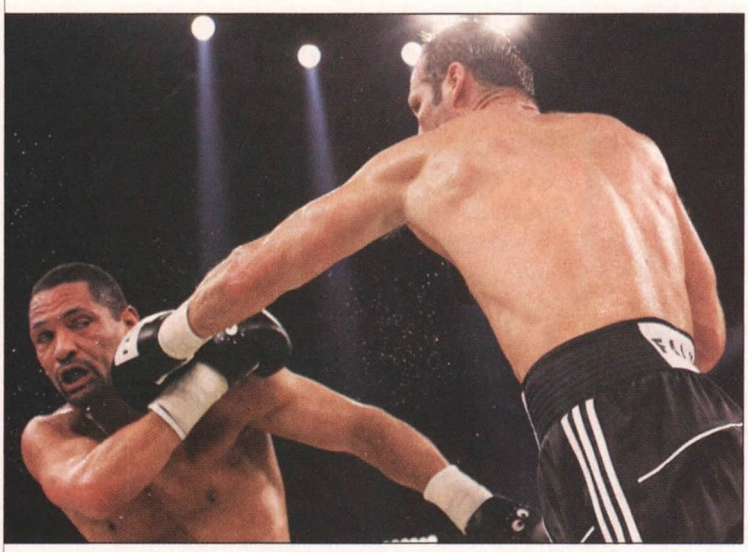
But he was able to wake up in ecstasy when he erased his sole setback by doing what he always did to win fights, boxing behind his southpaw jab and taking no unnecessary risks. When Hill got close, Maske pulled him in tight, and the almost constant clinching marred the spectacle. The drama was not in the quality of the bout, however, but in the possibility it gave to the German of removing something heavy from his shoulders, and Hill, himself 43 years old, was unable to raise the pace to a level that might have suffocated Maske's effort.

In the early rounds, neither man was able to establish much rhythm; Maske, understandably, remained tentative, while Hill's left jab was not the weapon he expected it to be. When Maske landed a combination in the fourth, Hill shouted, "Come on, hit me," which said something of his frustration. Maske continued to probe for openings, with some success, but the turning point came in round eight when their heads came together and Hill, who fell to the canvas from the force of the collision, emerged with blood spilling from a wound on his forehead. British referee Richie Davies waved them together again and Maske attacked the cut when the bout resumed, using his right jab effectively to pile up more points.

Hill, 50-6 (23), tried to take the play away but could never sustain his punching, and Maske, 31-1 (11), was able to do enough over the closing rounds to gain his victory. The judges were still too generous in their appraisal, with Matteo Fratini (Italy) and Dusan Hecko (Czech Republic) both scoring 117-110 for Maske, while Roger Tilleman (Belgium) had it 116-113, also for the German. THE RING made Maske the winner by 116-114, with a lot of the rounds close and difficult to score.

"If Hill wants a rubber match, he will have to ask me again in 10 years, because right now I'm retired again," Maske insisted. "This was a one-off for me and it's mission accomplished."

Promoter: **Werner Heinz**
(3-31-07)
***Brian Doogan*** ■



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*Ten years later, Maske avenges loss to Hill*

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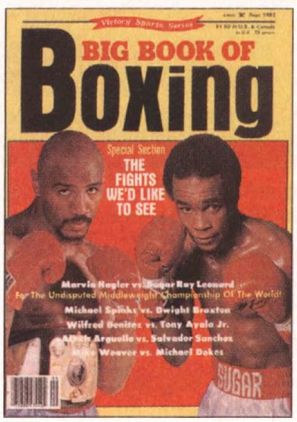


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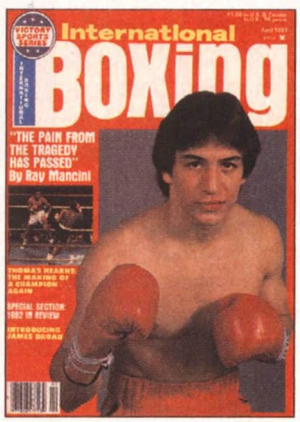


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(Continued from Page 13)

during a sluggish first round in which the normally busy Texan got off just 25 punches against the forward-pressing Godfrey.

In the second, Godfrey trapped Cora along the ropes and unleashed a savage combo that put Cora on the floor. Cora barely beat the count, only to eat several shots during a follow-up assault that convinced ref Eddie Claudio to stop it.

"Lefthanders aren't used to seeing other lefthanders," Godfrey said. "I'm so used to seeing lefthanders that I have no problem with them. I've seen all of the best southpaw styles in the world. Cora was arguably a top-10 opponent, and I went in there and made it look easy. It was definitely the best win of my career."

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

*The normally orthodox Godfrey turned southpaw against lefthander Felix Cora Jr. and tallied a second-round kayo for his best win to date.*

It was a win that came one day before popular stablemate Peter Manfredo Jr.'s stoppage loss to super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe in Wales. Those two coinciding events pushed Godfrey closer to being the top name in Rhode Island, a tiny state with an enormous boxing tradition.

Who would have thought that the successor to Vinny Pazienza could come out of a division that's usually an overlooked rest stop on the road from light heavyweight to heavyweight? Godfrey couldn't have planned it any better, though he is following a master plan he developed as a 16-year-old.

Godfrey decided way back then that if he didn't make the 2000 Olympics, he'd remain in the unpaid ranks until 2004. After getting knocked off in the 2000 Trials, Godfrey won the bronze at the 2001 Pan-Am Games and the gold at the 2004 U.S. Championships, but wound up as a second alternate for the 2004 Olympic Team.

Holding off his pro debut until age 23 allowed Godfrey to mature as a fighter and as a person. "All these wins I have now, I couldn't have done that at that time (after 2000)," said Godfrey, whose final amateur record was 194-23. "Those four years I took, I was fighting with the puffier gloves and the headgear to learn against guys who were at my level."

Though he said he never second-guessed his decision to remain in the amateurs, Godfrey had to struggle while fighting for free. Working as a hospital transporter, waiter, bouncer, or whatever other odd job he could find, Godfrey sometimes found himself walking to work through frigid streets in the dead of winter.

"I did pretty much everything I could to put 100 bucks in my pocket to pay the phone bill," he said with a laugh.

Godfrey has always had a strong motivation. Of all the opponents he's beaten, the toughest was Chad Brown. As in, Providence's rugged Chad Brown projects, where Godfrey and Estrada grew up. It's the type of place where owning a gun is like owning a cell phone.

"It was bad then," Estrada said. "It's even worse now. We don't live there anymore, but we have a lot of friends who still live there. There were a lot of shootings going on there, a lot of drugs."

"It's still bad," said Godfrey, whose parents still live in Chad Brown. "I go to a few funerals a year."

One of Godfrey's jobs leading up to the 2004 Trials was as a city lifeguard. These days, when he drives through his old neighborhood, Godfrey sees kids he once pulled from pools standing on street corners.

"Without boxing and without having a two-parent home, it would have been difficult [to escape]," said Godfrey, who also credits the influence of Estrada's father. "Even though I was living in that area, I was always surrounded by a positive environment."

Godfrey signed with New England-based promoter Jimmy Burchfield five weeks after the 2004 Trials. He made his pro debut in May of 2004 with a four-round decision against Glen Morgan on ESPN2. By the start of 2006, Godfrey was 10-0.

"This is an exceptional individual," Burchfield said. "He's everything that's good about boxing."

Burchfield and manager Bret Hallenbeck feel their man will get a shot by early 2008. As for the division's top two names, champion Jean-Marc Mormeck and top-contender O'Neil Bell, Too Smooth isn't too afraid based on what he saw March 17 when Mormeck outpointed Bell to regain the title.

"I think I'll box Mormeck silly before I knock him out," Godfrey said. "He fades in the end. He's a bully powerpuncher. He'll never find me in the ring. O'Neil Bell isn't polished at all as a boxer. Someone like myself, I don't even think it would be a fight. I'm licking my lips. If this is the division's best, then it's all mine for the taking."

And if Roland Estrada hadn't caught his son fighting with Godfrey all those years ago? Godfrey doesn't think it would have mattered. Eventually, one random day, he would have found his way into the back of Estrada's pickup truck.

"I didn't find boxing," Godfrey said. "Boxing found me." ■

***Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.***

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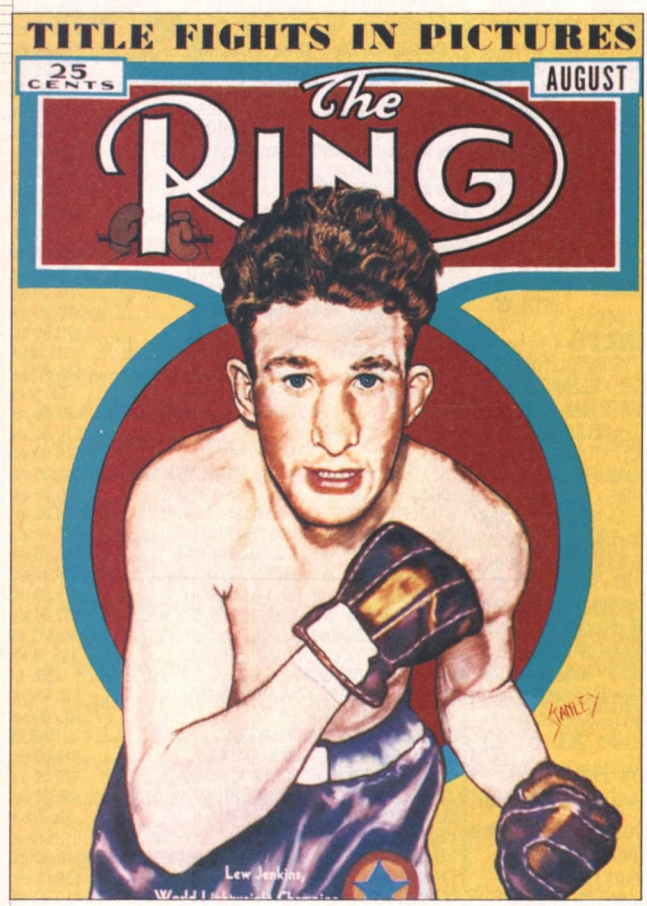
# August 1940




**COVER STORY: "Sweetwater Lew"** by T.W. McNiel was about Lew Jenkins, who had just won the lightweight championship by knocking out Lou Ambers in the third round of a bout held at Madison Square Garden. The "Sweetwater" part refers to the town in Texas where Jenkins resided.

## World Champions

*(for the period ended June 12, 1940)*

**Heavyweight:** Joe Louis
**Light Heavyweight:** Billy Conn
**Middleweight:** vacant
**Welterweight:** Henry Armstrong
**Lightweight:** Lew Jenkins
**Featherweight:** Harry Jeffra
**Bantamweight:** vacant
**Flyweight:** vacant

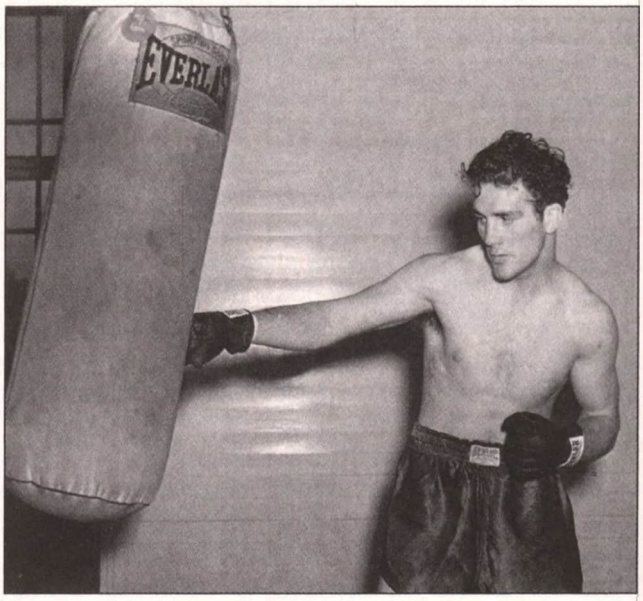
"The echo of the opening bell was still buzzing when Mr. Ambers found himself sitting on his nice, new black panties when Jenkins, crude cuss that he is, smacked the champion across the face with little or no regard for him being boss of the division," wrote McNiel. "Not only that, he just waded in and kept smacking, and when along the third round Al Weill, Ambers' manager, saw that Jenkins wasn't going to stop his uncultured actions, he simply was ready to toss the towel."

McNiel, who admitted that he thought Ambers was going to win, was also wrong concerning Jenkins' future, writing: "With a gal like Katie [Jenkins' wife and manager] as an incentive to fight for, Lew Jenkins' fists should be sufficient to enable him to rule the 135-pounders for some time."

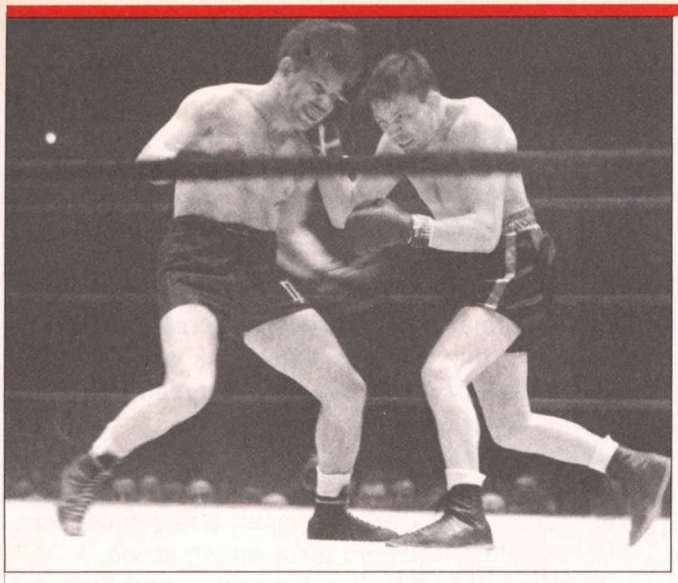
Jenkins lost the belt to Sammy Angott the following year.

**"Conn's Excursion Into Heavy Class Risky"** by Daniel M. Daniel questioned light heavyweight champion Billy Conn's decision to campaign as a heavyweight.

"Billy has before him the experience of Tommy Loughran, who was a marvel in his own class but who was a second-rater who was cruelly punished when he went into the heavyweight class," wrote Daniel. "Tommy was never the same again after that standing knockout he suffered against Jack Sharkey in New York."



*Conn took a big risk moving up to heavyweight*



*Ambers (right) outfought angry Davis*

**"Nat Fleischer Says"** gave a different view of Conn's move up to the heavyweight division.

"How Conn will fare against heavier lads remains to be seen, but if Billy fights as he did against [Gus] Lesnevich, there will be no stopping him. He'll climb and eventually he will take Joe Louis' place," wrote Fleischer.

Conn went on to win six straight against heavyweights, but was knocked out by Louis in their 1941 heavyweight title fight.

**"The Manager's Role"** by Ted Carroll looked at famous managers, past and present, examining their roles in getting both publicity and fat purses for their fighters. Carroll saved some of his highest praise for Jack "Doc" Kearns.

"Most ring students are agreed that the all-time money-maker among the boxing managers was Jack Kearns. The 'Dapper Doctor,' as he is known in the trade, must have cleared at least a million from his efforts in behalf of Jack Dempsey, Mickey Walker, Jackie Fields, etc. A debonair fellow, well-groomed, smooth-spoken, Kearns reeked with the class that must be part of anyone who makes big demands and gets what he asks for."

The complete stylistic opposite of Kearns was James J. Johnson, whom Carroll called "garrulous and aggressive ... derby aslant over one eye, his chest out like a belligerent bantam rooster, Jaunty James has goaded many an unsuspecting victim into acting as an unwitting tool to James' advantage."

**"Hold That Temper"** by Hype Igoe was a theme piece that spun off of Al "Bummy" Davis' loss to Lou Ambers: "Angered, his pride hurt by the punishment he was taking, Davis tossed science to the winds. He waded in and instead of finding Ambers, the majority of Al's blows were wasted. The more angry he became, the more misses he made."

Igoe then went on to discus well-know fighters such as Jack Sharkey, Jimmy Britt, "Mysterious" Billy Smith, and Aldo Spoldi, all of whom hurt their careers by losing their cool in the middle of important matches.

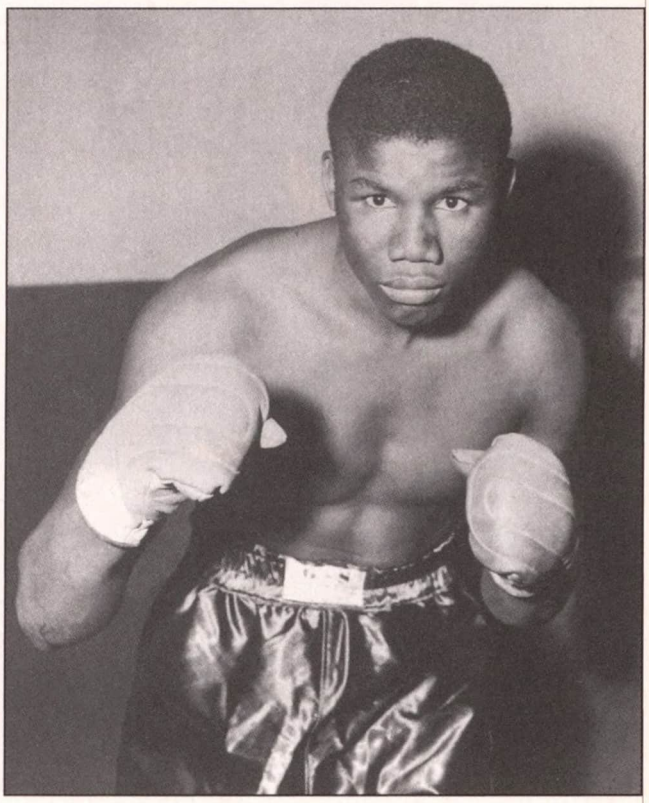
"Spoldi goes wild when things are against him," wrote Igoe. "His Latin temper is displayed at the least provocation when in the ring ... fighters of that type don't get very far."

While we don't doubt Igoe's assessment of Spoldi's temper, it is interesting to note that the Italian welter was disqualified only twice in 98 pro bouts.

**"Cleveland Chatter"** by local correspondent Sparky Rudolph was highlighted by future Hall of Famer Jimmy Bivins, who was already garnering quite a bit of attention after only nine professional bouts.

"Bivins, that smooth, panther-like kid from Cleveland, scored his ninth straight win in as many pro fights when he put the snore on Paul Frasier, of Chicago, in 57 seconds of the first round," wrote Rudolph. "Bivins is the kid that your RING scribe has been raving about as being the outstanding middleweight in the business today."

**"The Ring In Mexico"** by Carlos Vera featured the opening of the 9,000-seat Arena National in Mexico City. "The crowd filled the arena that can boast as being the best in all of Mexico and perhaps in all Latin-American countries," wrote Vera. "In the main bout, Joe Conde won the verdict over Paul Lee." ■



*Bivins' potential greatness was recognized early*

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

# Oops, I Made A Mistake

Boxing officials constantly face criticism, but with so much at stake it is to be expected. Furthermore, when negative commentary is valid, how should commissions examine it and should there be repercussions? After all, every fighter is owed the best referee, judges, and physicians every time he or she steps into the ring. Although one performance is only a snapshot of an official's body of work, a single misstep can make or break a boxer's career.

Organized training is available through many commissions, as well as International Professional Ring Officials (IPRO) and the Association of Boxing Commissions. Licensed officials take exams in order to gain certification, but passing an exam is no guarantee of competency. It means you know the rules and understand how to judge, referee, or medically handle numerous scenarios, with the ultimate purpose being to create standardization. But the only true benchmark is how well an official does his or her job, not how many tests the official has passed.

*New Jerseys' progressive commissioner Larry Hazzard*

Every commission has to deal with officials making incorrect calls or delivering incorrect scores. In New Jersey, if a referee misses a few calls, commissioner Larry Hazzard takes strong action.

"I will wait two to three months, and then put them in again to ref," said Hazzard. "However, if mistakes were to occur on a regular basis, I have a no-tolerance policy."

When it relates to judging, Hazzard is even stronger.

"When a judge shows a pattern, you can't use them again," he insisted. "Every fighter deserves a good decision."

Several years ago, Pennsylvania Executive Director Greg Sirb created a yearly compilation of judges' scores. In this way, judges can compare how often they were in agreement with their counterparts. Right after a fight, Sirb will brainstorm with officials regarding their actions.

"If it is a referee, I will bring them in to watch the fight and discuss it," said Sirb. "Every 12 to 18 months, I have referees critique one another."

If medical issues arise, Sirb will have his chief physician review what took place. Pennsylvania even has a manual regarding medical procedures for all to follow.

Barry Druxman, a licensed boxing judge in Washington State who created a training program to train officials, stresses the importance in dealing with officials in a diplomatic and professional manner.

"Barring incompetence," Druxman said, "officials working fights are good enough to realize their mistake and professional enough to make corrections in the future to prevent any additional judging errors or missed calls from happening."

In Nevada, however, errors are rarely addressed unless there is public outcry. The Nevada State Athletic Commission's underlying solution seems to be to take the official out of the media spotlight, so some officials suddenly become conspicuously absent for a few months.

If a promoter or a fighter's representative issues a complaint about a referee, judge, or doctor, he or she may not work certain cards for years without

ever receiving notification from the commission as to why. Suspension might be appropriate if the referee or judge requires remedial work, but the way the NSAC handles such actions can resemble incarceration without rehabilitation, and therefore the recidivism rate is unpredictable. The opposite may also occur: An official's performance may appear inappropriate to the public, but may please a promoter, which often means that official will work the promoter's next card.

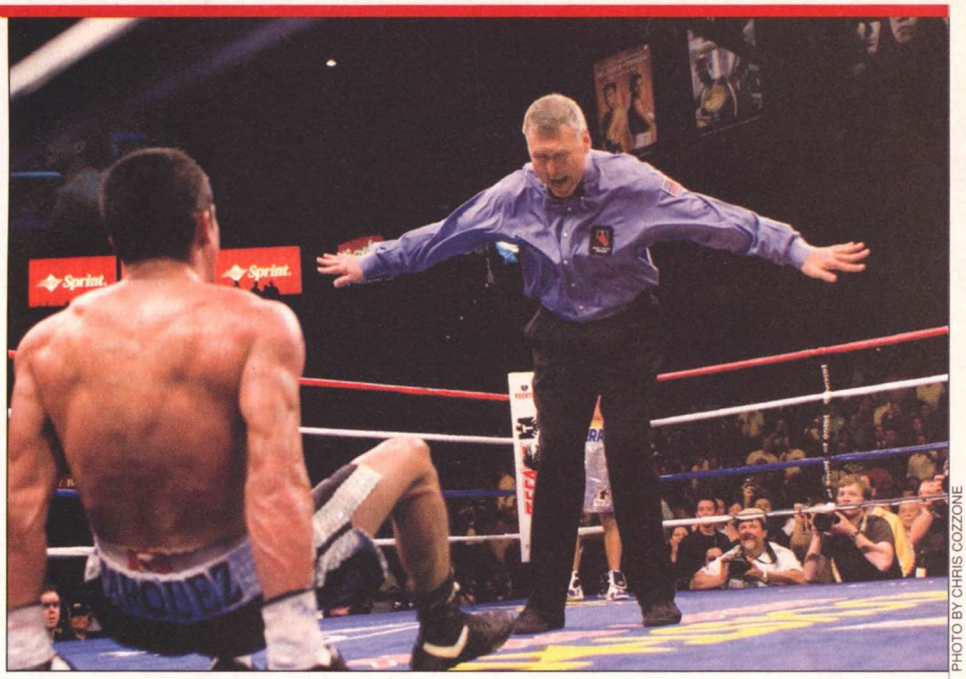



PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

*Nady failed to see the punch that floored Marquez*

But even with all the criticism it receives, only a handful of officials have been added to the Nevada State Athletic Commission's roster over the last 15 years. Out-of-state officials have gone so far as to become Nevada residents with the hope they would one day work a Vegas fight, but few have received consideration.

It's even tougher to find qualified ring physicians than a competent referee or judge. Ringside physicians receive little training compared to other officials. Many don't want to put in the time, while others are fearful of liability and lack of malpractice coverage. Unfortunately, some states don't have the option of waiting for a committed, trained physician.

From the time physicians enter medical school, they are subjected to routine exams, defending their actions and diagnoses. These sessions can be contentious and humiliating, but it is how doctors learn. It should be the same ringside. But few commissions aggressively deal with ring physicians. Peer review is frowned upon, and many executive directors are fearful of telling a physician what to do. So, it is the fighters who suffer.

Even under the *best* circumstances with the *best* officials, errors still occur. On March 13, 2007, Juan Manuel Marquez won a 12-round decision over Marco Antonio Barrera. Unfortunately, Las Vegas referee Jay Nady missed a knockdown. Thankfully, the knockdown would not have changed the decision, but many questions arose, including how instant replay would have helped.

New Jersey recently implemented instant replay in an effort to correct mistakes.

"I have a great deal of faith in instant replay," said Hazzard. "In a televised fight, we are already looking at a replay during the one-minute rest period." Hazzard stipulated that three minutes is allowed to make the determination, but notes, "I can review the tape, and a decision can be made by the time the bell rings for the next round. So much money is at stake, a boxer can't afford a loss. Boxing needs to institute the correctness of other sports."

Not everyone is in agreement.

Sirb believes boxing is a sport built on continuance: three-minute rounds with one minute in between. "I am all for making the right call, but it is a judgment call, and if you stop the action, it can change the outcome of a fight; someone gets an advantage."

Part of Sirb's concern is that victory is built on a fighter's cumulative accomplishments. If a fight is held up for instant replay, he feels it will inadvertently disadvantage the fighter who has gained a degree of momentum. Sirb notes that Pennsylvania regulations have allowed him to go to instant replay for years, but it has not been needed during a single contest.

Whether or not instant replay becomes standard in boxing, and irrespective of how many continuing education courses officials attend, the fighters deserve the best we can give them. Not everyone who works hard and puts in the time should be a ring official, and not all ring officials with the same experience are equally qualified. Moreover, when errors occur, they need to be addressed immediately. If an official is not reliable and cannot make accurate split-second decisions, then they need to find something else to do. Boxing cannot afford such mistakes. ■

# Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

## Ring Respect

As the list of alphabet organizations grow, credibility of the original three alphabet gangs diminishes. As those gangs slowly lose their foothold, fighters and promoters will be less likely to pay the outrageous sanctioning fees, and thus will gravitate toward the one title that charges no fees and retains the utmost respect within the boxing community: THE RING championship.

JOE PETKA
joepetka@gmail.com

## Marquez-Barrera Reaction

The recent Barrera-Marquez fight on HBO was a great fight, but it was easy to watch that fight and come away with several misconceptions. In the interest of clarity, I suggest these observations:

•The knockdown was, as noted by Jim Lampley et. al, an authentic one. It came, however, at the end of a strong round for Marquez. The correct scoring for that round was probably even. (It is hard to believe that the ref "missed" it.)

•The HBO call of the fight was hopelessly pro-Barrera. It was a very close fight. I had Marquez winning by a point. The outrageously one-sided decision was absurd. It could have gone either way.

•There should be a rematch. I pick Marquez. This time emphatically.

•Manny Pacquiao beats both of these guys pretty easily.

FRANK GANNON
Demorest, GA

What the hell happened in the Barrera-Marquez fight? I'll tell you what happened: The only way Barrera was going to win this fight is if he were to knock Marquez out. Why? Because arrangements were made for Marquez to win a decision. They figured if Marquez lost, he'd have no chance to make a comeback for a major fight with Pacquiao. But if Barrera lost, he'd still be a major star and be able fight Pacquiao or a rematch with Marquez. Either way, it plays out to make more big fights and more big money.

I guess Barrera's loss turned out to be better for boxing. After all, that is how it was planned, right? Do you think they were going to let Barrera's retirement plan play out so smoothly? Hell no! You gotta milk the cow, baby, even at the expense of tarnishing his legacy. Farfetched? Not at all. When you're dealing with this kind of money, anything is possible.

AMOS REYNA
Crosbyton, TX

I really enjoyed the Marco Antonio Barrera-Juan Manuel Marquez fight. The only thing wrong with the fight was the decision. I had no favorite in the fight; I like both fighters, but I had Barrera up by two points. The worst would be a draw. Barrera was robbed. The fight was really close and I don't see how two judges saw it 116-111, and the 118-109 score was ridiculous.

JUAN MUNOZ
Sedona, AZ

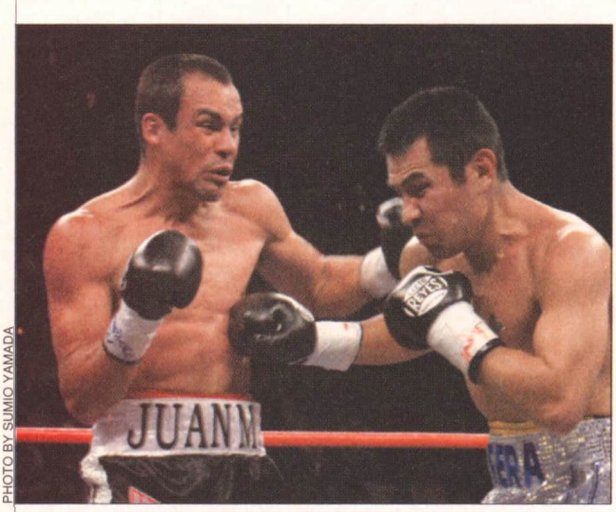
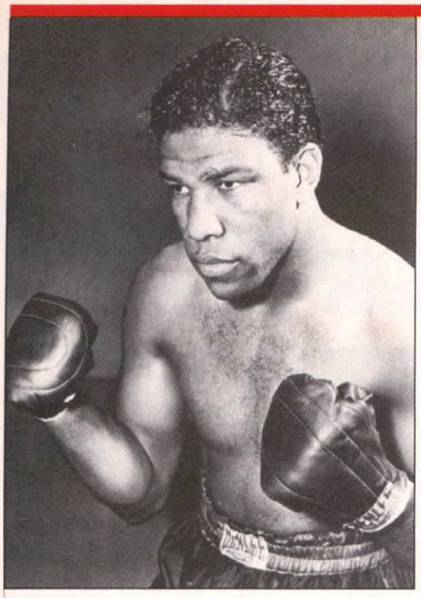



PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

*Most of the mail THE RING received this issue concerned the Juan Manuel Marquez-Marco Antonio Barrera bout. Frank Gannon, Amos Reyna, and Juan Munoz were typical of readers who enjoyed the fight but were unhappy with the official scoring.*



*Former middleweight contender Bert Lytell, who beat Hall of Famer Charley Burley, should also be considered for the Hall, writes reader Tom Ross.*

## Is Lytell Hall Worthy?

I agree with "Digging Deep" columnist Ivan Goldman that Georgie Abrams belongs in the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Another potential candidate, in my opinion, is Bert Lytell, who split two bouts with Charley Burley, and, like Burley, was turned down by Ray Robinson.

TOM ROSS
Beloit, WI

## Replay Endorsement

As a true fight fan and long time reader of THE RING magazine, let me be the first to say that I support instant replay in the sport of boxing. First of all, fight fans are sick and tired of bad decisions and poor calls by referees. Instant replay will eliminate 99 percent of the controversies involving disputes over whether or not a cut was caused by a punch. Instant replay will also allow fighters who are wrongly penalized for fouls to have a chance to get their deducted points back.

As long as instant replay is properly controlled (as it is in the NFL), it will be a huge step in keeping the fight game honest. We still have a long ways to go, but we are now one step closer, thanks to New Jersey boxing commissioner Larry Hazzard.

STEVEN MINX
San Bernardino, CA

## A Touch Of Class

After coaching at a Golden Gloves tournament in my province of British Columbia, I felt compelled to be an advocate for legendary coach Al Mitchell. During the course of the tournament, he displayed class and integrity to those that were fortunate enough to be in his orbit. I could tell you at least a half-dozen incidences that I witnessed that would attest to his class.

Al is a modest man, so I will do his bragging for him. One event in particular captured my heart. After my 12-year-old fighter lost a decision, Al spent considerable time calming him down, fostering his confidence, and entertaining him with great boxing stories. Eventually, my fighter stopped sobbing and asked Al, "Will you still be around when I am a world champion?" At that point, I feigned that something was in my eye and rubbed at it vigorously to disguise the emotion of the moment. At that instance, Al hit that vital nerve that all coaches of the Sweet Science aspire to hone in on—inspiration. Somehow, I knew that he had been there a thousand times before.

SHAWN O'DONNELL
Mission, British Columbia

## Calzaghe-Kessler Must Happen

After seeing Mikkel Kessler dominate Librado Andrade on HBO, there is almost no doubt in my mind that he is more than a match for Joe Calzaghe. The two of them could draw a huge gate in Europe, and I'm sure HBO would televise their fight. If Joe retires without taking on Kessler, it will be a blemish on his record forever. He needs to stop talking this nonsense about moving up or fighting one of the middleweights, and instead defend his title against contenders in his own division. The fight would garner a payday, exposure, and would prove that he is a worthy champion. Man up, Joe.

LAWRENCE DONNELLY
pucklptmd@hotmail.com

## A Study In Contrasts

Joshua Clottey vs. Diego was a barnburner. Clottey deserves praise for his controlled, measured approach as he slowly took poor Diego apart. Corrales put his punches together, but his strength at welterweight is questionable. He is an exciting fighter, but he has defensive lapses that hurt him. Maybe "Chico" can add some strength training to his regimen.

As far the Joe Calzaghe-Peter Manfredo fight is concerned, ref Terry O'Connor should be banned for not letting Calzaghe show more of his excellent hand speed and ring generalship. What a shame. Who knows what would have unfolded?

GLOVER HILL III
Wewahitchka, FL ■

PHOTO BY MOGENS FLINDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Mikkel Kessler's emphatic decision over Librado Andrade has convinced a lot of people that the Dane has a good change of beating world champion Joe Calzaghe. Reader Lawrence Donnelly is among those urging Calzaghe to give Kessler a shot.*

# [Looking Ahead]

By Joe Santoliquito

## Peter Finally Gets Maskaev

**Samuel Peter** has taken a strange and circuitous route to get a chance at WBC heavyweight titlist **Oleg Maskaev**. Peter, THE RING's number-two rated heavyweight contender, was supposed to fight Maskaev after twice beating **James Toney** in so-called WBC eliminators.

In most cases, winning just one eliminator would mean an automatic title shot. But through some arcane bylaw, the WBC wanted to bypass Peter and give former world heavyweight champion **Vitali Klitschko** the next crack at Maskaev.

"We're going to fight Peter; we were just waiting for the WBC to make the decision in terms of who exactly we would fight," said **Frank Kesch**, Maskaev's manager. "Fighting Vitali, financially, appeared to be the stronger fight, but it really doesn't matter now. We waited for the WBC to make a decision, and they didn't. Unfortunately, Vitali Klitschko backed out. We had the Klitschko fight. Everyone was in agreement that we would fight Klitschko. Peter was getting step-aside money, Klitschko was getting his chance to win a world championship again. At the last minute, we couldn't get a signed contract from Klitschko. So here we are with Peter."

The way it should have been all along.

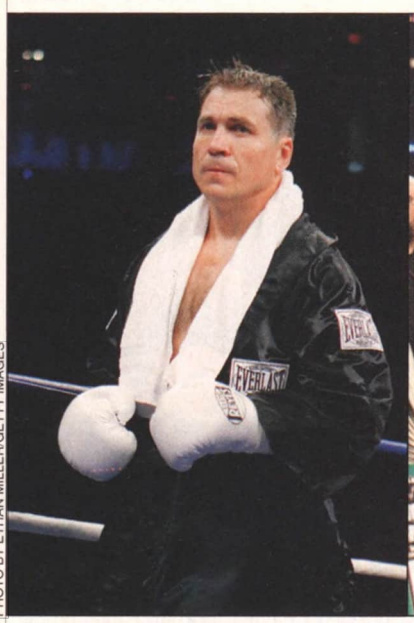
Originally, Maskaev-Peter was scheduled for late-June, but following all the wrangling, July or August (at a site and on a network to be determined) is more likely.

Whenever it happens, Maskaev, 34-5 (26), will have his hands full against Peter, 28-1 (22). "The Big O" last fought on December 10 in Moscow, Russia, easily outpointing **Peter Okhello** in a ho-hum 12-round decision. Though Maskaev couldn't score the knockout, he had a human punching bag in Okhello, who lost by scores of 120-107, 118-109, and 120-107.

Peter, meanwhile, is coming off perhaps his most impressive victory as a pro. In his January rematch with Toney, Peter tore through the wily veteran to score a unanimous 12-round victory. More importantly, Peter showed versatility against an elite-caliber fighter for the first time in his career. His punches were more accurate, his footwork was vastly improved, and he displayed a powerful jab. One jab even caught Toney by surprise and knocked him down in the second round.

Klitschko, once in the forefront in this Byzantine situation, now drifts back into the shadows, although all the parties involved have acknowledged Klitschko's role as the mandatory for the winner, and the has WBC ordered the Maskaev-Peter winner to fight Klitschko by the end of the year.

"All that matters right now is that Sam is getting his shot, that's really all I care about," said Dino Duva, president of Duva Boxing. "We feel confident in the fight, but I feel Maskaev is an underrated fighter. He's a better fighter than people think. He has a lot of heart and he's a big guy, with a good right hand. But I like my guy's chances. Sam has been so frustrated waiting for this title fight, I really feel sorry for the next guy that gets into the ring with him. We're not taking anything for granted. It's going to be a good fight. It's finally going to happen. That's the most important thing."



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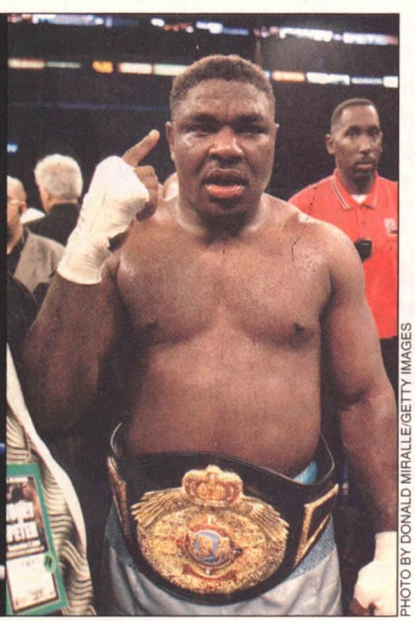

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*The waiting is finally over for both Maskaev (left) and Peter (right).*

## Listen Up

Undefeated super middleweight **Lucian Bute**, 19-0 (16), will take on **Sakio Bika**, 22-2-2 (14), on June 15, at the Bell Centre, in Montreal, Canada. Bika is riding a two-fight winning streak, after suffering a decision loss to world super middleweight champion **Joe Calzaghe** in October 2006. He should be a real challenge to Bute, who decisioned **Sergey Tatevosyan** over 12 rounds in his last fight, in January ... On June 23, as part of the **Ricky Hatton-Jose Luis Castillo** undercard at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas, IFB light heavyweight titlist **Clinton Woods**, 40-3-1 (24), will meet **Julio Gonzalez**, 41-3 (25), in what promises to be a compelling fight. THE RING ranks Woods and Gonzalez third and ninth, respectively, among 175-pounders. It will be Woods' first fight since winning a controversial split-decision over **Glen Johnson**, in September '06. ■

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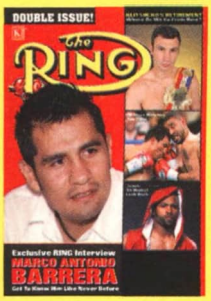


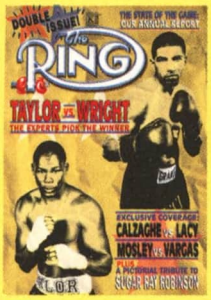


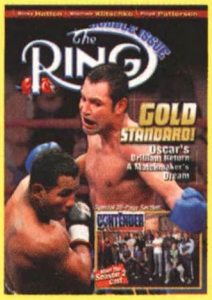


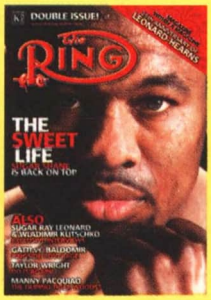


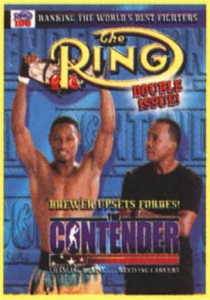

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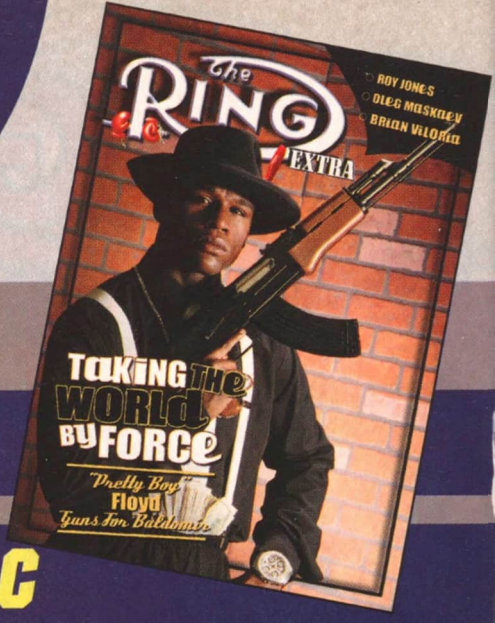


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